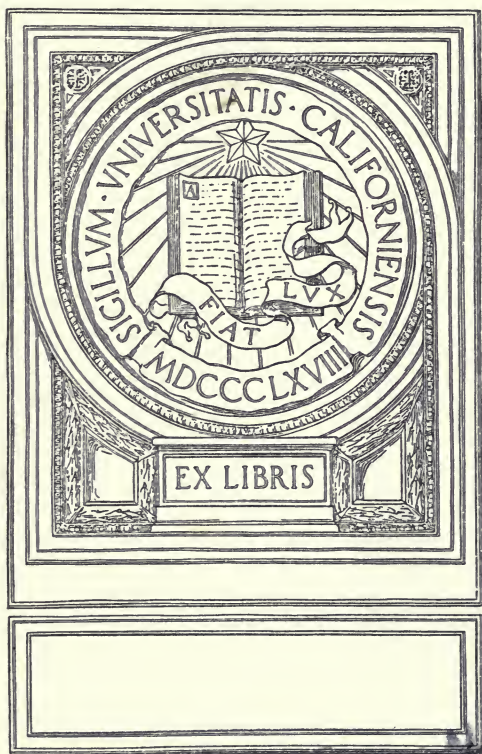


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# THE ACTOR;

OR;

A PEEP BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

Being Passages in the Lives of

BOOTH

AND SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

~~~~~  
" All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts."  
*As you Like It.*

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## PREFACE.

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THE Author of the following pages, several years since, contemplated the production of a Biography of JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH, and with that end in view, wrote several chapters, which, with material alterations, are embraced in the present volume.

Subsequent events, however, induced him to modify the character of the work, having in the meantime become possessed of many facts and incidents relative to the Drama and those connected with it, which he believed would prove interesting to the public.

Rather than re-write what he had already written, he retained Mr. Booth as his hero, and blended such other information with his subject, as could be gleaned from the materials at his command.

The larger portion of the work has been produced at night, after a more laborious occupation during the day. Conscious of its numerous faults, the author is still persuaded that it will be found not without interest, and by the advice of others, in whose judgment he has more confidence than his own, he is induced to submit it, "with all its imperfections," to the public.

It is not with a view of softening the asperity of criti-

cism that he proclaims these facts; for however much others may wince under the lash which the press sometimes inflicts upon a writer, he is proof against those "paper bullets of the brain," which are generally tempered by prejudice, or surcharged with interest.

That there will be found numerous persons who will differ materially from him in the opinions which he has expressed, is sufficiently obvious; but it does not follow as a necessary consequence, that his are erroneous.

The individual who would sacrifice a principle or discard his conviction of a truth, because it did not coincide with the general opinion, has very little claim to respect for decision of character, and to the author of this work must be conceded the merit of candor, even though it be at the expense of his judgment.

In conclusion, he would render his acknowledgments to numerous members of the theatrical profession for many valuable facts and suggestions which he could not elsewhere have obtained.



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# THE ACTOR, &c.

## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

IN endeavoring to rescue from oblivion some of the incidents in the lives of BOOTH and his contemporaries, the difficulty has been, not in the meagerness of material, but rather in its abundance. As the epicure, at a rich banquet of varied and curious dishes, desirous of selecting such as will best gratify his palate and appease his appetite,—in the endeavor to select the best, leaves the choicest untasted, so we, among the numerous adventures, both on and off the stage, of Booth and others, have probably left much that would have been of more value than what we have written.

In the history of Mr. Booth, we know that there are some facts which, although they might illustrate more particularly the various phases of his character, and prove entertaining to the reader, cannot with propriety be made public, while the subject of them is still alive, nor would the author willingly submit to the public gaze, what belongs only to the privacies of life.

There are chords in the human heart, which a breath may cause to vibrate; there are incidents in the life of every man, an allusion to which might open those wounds of sorrow that time alone would heal. Still, there are some events belonging to history, that should be recorded ere they pass into the Lethe of oblivion;

there are adventures with which the public are imperfectly acquainted, in which the actors have manifested no great degree of regard for public opinion, and that serve as illustrations of character, that may be written without offence. These we have endeavored to chronicle, giving them a "local habitation and a name."

Mr. Booth has been long before the public, and his wild and curious adventures have been related in so many varied forms, each narrator adding those embellishments which his imagination supplied, that the actor himself might reap considerable amusement from listening to the marvellous stories that are told of him, and of which, previous to their recital, he was profoundly ignorant.

That Mr. Booth is sometimes mad, either from hereditary disease, or temporary aberration of mind, is sufficiently evident, though sometimes, like Hamlet's, there may be "method in it."

We have not unfrequently heard it suggested, that some of his eccentricities might have been induced by a spirit of affectation, to gain notoriety ; but not only would the wish to appear so betray an eccentricity in itself, but the extraordinary lengths to which Mr. Booth sometimes carries his humors, would hardly satisfy a reasonable mind, that it was merely the desire of attracting observation ; nor can his madness, for such it sometimes is, be the result of a mind diverted from its natural course, by an over indulgence at the shrine of Bacchus, for during the early career of Mr. Booth, and indeed long after his arrival in this country, he was remarkable for his abstemiousness.

Whether the poet who said, in effect, that genius was to madness nearly allied, uttered the truth, or otherwise, we are not prepared to decide, but certain it is, that those who are gifted with inherent powers of mind of a superior order, are generally characterized by their extraordinary departures from the usual conventional forms of society.



Some explanation of the cause may be found in the fact, that with genius ever exists the power to originate, and originality disdains to follow in the common road, but regarding the same objects with a different vision, carves its own way, and travels in a path of its own creation.

If genius, whose energies and exertions are applied to some ordinary pursuit, be marked for its eccentricities, is it surprising that when devoted to the representation of the passions, to the delineation of character, and to the portrayal of strong emotions—when it seeks to embody itself in the forms which the poet's imagination has created, it should be characterized by a still greater departure from the usual modes and customs of life ?

The actor's career is certainly a chequered one. His profession demands devoted study, patient investigation, and laborious thought. He lives in a world of imagination. The forms that are floating through his brain, are the ideal creations of the poet's fancy ; the matter upon which his mind finds its aliment, are the "airy nothings" which the bard's invention has conjured up, and as unsubstantial as the "baseless fabric of a vision."

Then there is the excitement of playing. With the Argus eyes of the critics upon him, before the blaze of beauty and fashion, amidst the plaudits of admiring spectators, he comes forth to embody, in his own visible person, some character in which the fairest or darkest passions of our nature are interwoven.

If, like Mr. Booth, all thoughts of his own individuality are merged in that of the character he is representing, for the time, at least, he is what he purports to be, the visible personification of what the poet has created.

The smoothly flowing verse, with its harmoniously constructed sentences and rounded periods, enriched with glowing pictures of poetical imagery, or impassioned appeals to the heart, is uttered to breathless hearers ; and when, amidst the deafening peals of applause which await the actor's triumphs, he retires, with mind

excited and body fatigued, to mingle with the world, the affinity between which and that wherein his thoughts have been fixed, being as widely asunder as earth from heaven, is it wonderful that the actor should be unlike ordinary men ?

If, in addition to all this, he be, like Booth, the child of sensibility, the creature of impulse and passion, of warm feelings and the most tender susceptibilities, is it a matter of astonishment that his "mind" should become "diseased," and assume those peculiarities akin to madness ? Nor is it, to us, a matter of surprise, amidst this chaotic mass of "madness and impertinency mixed," that in his hours of despondency (for he cannot live without a portion of that excitement which an actor's life engenders, and to which he becomes habituated), he should have recourse to the glass, as an antidote to mental disquietude.

Much as we can find in extenuation of Booth's unfortunate infirmity, yet, as we have seen him in his latter years, like some proud monument in ruins, from our hearts we have anathematized the accursed habit of indulgence in the "social glass," which has led to such lamentable results.

The last time that we saw him in Hamlet, we could not but dwell on the appositeness of Ophelia's remark :—

"O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown !"

The laurel wreath of fame, to which years should have added renewed freshness and vitality, had almost withered on his brow ; the once sonorous and musical voice had fallen into a nasal utterance ; the fine, manly countenance, once susceptible of every variety of expression, was disfigured ; the clear blue eye, with its intense lustre, irradiating the countenance and revealing the depths of the soul, sunken and dimmed, and his mind, once the seat of every bright intelligence,

"Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh."

## CHAPTER I.

Birth of Booth—Early Pursuits—Provincial Tour—First appearance at Covent Garden Theatre—Return to Brighton—Engagement of Kean, and his non-appearance—Booth substituted, and his success in Richard the Third—Booth's visit to London—Unexpected announcement of himself on the play-bills—Incident at the rehearsal—Anecdote of Miss Booth—*Début* in Richard at Covent Garden—His success—Booth accused of imitation—Cooke and Kemble Schools of acting contrasted—Kean's visit to Booth—Offer of an engagement at Drury Lane—Kean and Booth in "Othello"—Excitement in London—Desultory Remarks.

JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH, the principal subject of our work, was born at St. Pancras, near London, on the first of May, 1796, and at an early age was remarkable for the precocity of his intellect.

His father was a respectable attorney and solicitor, residing in Queen street, Bloomsbury, and his mother was a descendant of the celebrated John Wilkes.

Mr. Booth's juvenile inclinations were directed to pictorial pursuits, and drawings are said to be extant from his pencil, marked by freedom of execution and boldness of design. He entered, however, into the navy from positive choice, and was merely dissuaded by the entreaties of his father from embarking for America as a Midshipman, in a vessel which, with nearly the whole of the crew, was afterwards lost. Mr. Booth then applied his talents to the art of printing, which he speedily abandoned for the study of the law, but after a short period, he discovered that the dry and musty volumes of Blackstone and Coke were not exactly suited to his volatile disposition, and peculiar train of thought.



His finished education and fine classical taste sought their development in the production of works of art, and he, therefore, abandoned the profession of the law, for that of painting. He is said to have made considerable proficiency as an artist, but his ambition rested not here, for he applied himself to the modelling of images of beauty from marble, which, for a time, he pursued with great avidity ; but neither painting nor sculpture satisfied those cravings which are often allied to the restless heart of genius. Disdaining the inanimate forms of the painter, and the more cold and lifeless productions of the sculptor, he sought, in the actor's art, to combine and embody them with the creations of the poet :—

“ For *Poetry* can ill express  
 Full many a tone of thought sublime ;  
 And *Painting*, mute and motionless,  
 Steals but a glance from time ;  
 But, by the mighty Actor brought,  
 Illusion's wedded triumphs come,  
 Verse ceases to be airy thought,  
 And *Sculpture* to be dumb !”

Mr. Booth, like Cooke, Kean, Kemble, Forrest, and the majority of actors who have acquired any reputation in their profession, began his career among a company of amateurs, and one of his most determined enemies, curiously enough, found a subject of ridicule in his sudden exaltation from a barn, to a rivalry with Edmund Kean. Instead, however, of discovering any disgrace in commencing his profession at the lowest round of the ladder, we regard his rapid rise as a sure indication of real merit.

His first theatrical engagement was commenced under the auspices of Messrs Jonas and Penley, who then conducted a company of comedians at Deptford. He began his career with *Campillo*, a subordinate character in the “Honey Moon,” on the 13th of December, 1813.

He continued in the circuit regularly made by these managers, until compelled by illness to a temporary retirement, at the expiration of which he accompanied Mr. Penley on a professional tour to the continent, and after performing at Amsterdam, Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, and Ostend, returned to England in April, 1815.

In the summer of the same year, he went on a provincial tour to Worthing and Brighton, where he played with a company, under the management of Mr. Thomas Trotter, among whom was the celebrated comedian, Harley.

Under the same direction, he afterwards became prompter, until October, when he made his *débüt*, in conjunction with Mrs. Alsop, at Covent Garden Theatre, as *Silvius*, in "As You Like It."

Here he remained during the season, appearing occasionally in subordinate characters, among which was *Henry*, in the translation of "*La Pie Voleuse*," at a salary of two pounds per week, a similar sum to that which Kean received, during his first regular engagement at the Haymarket Theatre.

We might here descant on the difficulties which the novice in the theatrical profession, who has "no friends to back his suit withal," must encounter at the large theatres, but the reader is probably aware that Kean, Cooper, and various other actors had to submit to similar treatment, before they were allowed an opportunity to rise, and can imagine the hindrances to advancement among a large company, where each member is jealous of the other's success.

Upon the termination of the year's engagement, Mr. Booth assumed the acting management of the Worthing Theatre, at a weekly remuneration of two guineas, and a "benefit" at the close of the season. He soon after relinquished the situation, but in 1817, returned to Brighton and Worthing, where he acquired

considerable reputation, and was much admired for his representation of *Fitzharding*, in the comedy of "Smiles and Tears."

While performing at Brighton, Edmund Kean, who was then in the zenith of his glory, having been engaged and announced to appear as *Sir Giles Overreach*, disappointed the audience by his non-arrival from London, and Mr. Booth was called upon, at a very short notice, to the surprise of every one (including himself), to supply his place. Surprise, however, was succeeded by astonishment and admiration at the extraordinary talent that he exhibited, and such was the deep and indelible impression he made, that to this day it is remembered and spoken of in terms of the highest praise.

Those who had witnessed Kean in the same character, regarded Booth as his equal, and his youth and beauty (for his face was eminently handsome and intellectual) excited a prejudice in his favor.

A nobleman, interested in the affairs of Covent Garden Theatre, having witnessed the performance, wrote immediately to Mr. Harris, the proprietor, respecting Booth's extraordinary success, but receiving no answer, he advised the subject of our remarks to repair at once to London, with another communication from him to Mr. Harris.

Booth obtained the consent of Mr. Trotter, and the coach that carried him to London, passed on the road the one that conveyed a respose to the first letter, calling him immediately to the metropolis.

When he arrived at the "Elephant and Castle," curiosity induced him, as it does all actors who arrive in London from the provincial theatres, to examine the play-bills of the day, and while his eye rested on the one advertising the performance at Covent Garden, what was his astonishment at finding himself announced for the following night, as *Richard the Third*.



At the theatre, the ensuing morning, when he went to rehearsal, he was met with the accustomed sneers and prognostications of failure that almost invariably attend the first efforts of aspiring talent. The company clustered together, and one remarked, "Why, I declare! It's little Silvius of last season, come to play Richard the Third, in opposition to the great Kean!" and another, who seemed more astonished and chagrined at the event, observed, "I wonder, now, if the manager expects respectable actors to play secondary parts to *him*!"

Alone and friendless, Booth was still sanguine of success. The latent fire which lurks in the heart of genius, though smothered by the ashes of neglect, needs but an opportunity to burst into a blaze whose light no obstacles can quench; the prophetic mind of its possessor glows with the consciousness of its power, and no circumstances, however opposing—no sarcasm, however pointed—can dissuade it from its destined consummation.

On every side, he encountered sour and contemptuous looks, and so indignant was the leading actress of the establishment, the celebrated Miss Booth, at the presumption of "little Silvius," in attempting to shine in the same orbit with herself, that she called him aside, and remarked, that as he was a namesake of hers, although no relation, he would be regarded as her brother, an inference which she wished to be avoided; and that there might be no misunderstanding on the subject, she would esteem it a particular favor, and one not easily forgotten, if he would add an "e" to his name!

Mr. Booth, however much he may have admired the "*belles lettres*," thought it not inconsistent with his gallantry to decline being taught his *letters* by a *belle*.

This amusing request, as arrogant as it was ridiculous, serves to exhibit the questionable position which the great tragedian occupied in the estimation of the Covent Garden company, and will remind the reader of the advice given by a certain little actor of the

Drury Lane stock, who on several occasions recommended Mr. Kean, previous to his appearance, not to loiter upon the bench in the hall, as was the custom, but to attend the front of the house, and profit by the good acting he there might have an opportunity to behold.

Booth, however, played *Richard the Third* according to announcement, on February 12th, 1817, and such was the powerful impression that he made by its representation, that in the estimation of many, he was not only regarded as the rival, but the equal of Kean.

Kean, at this period, was drawing immense houses, and in the very acme of his glory. A rival was what none anticipated, and the warm eulogiums that were lavished on Booth, now filled the opposition house to overflowing.

Booth awoke on the morning after his success, and like Byron, "found himself famous." Letters of congratulation flowed in from all quarters, and solicitations from managers, anxious to secure his services, came

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks  
In Valambroso."

Even his namesake forgave him for not adding the "e" to his name, and the other members of the company were willing to allow that "little Silviu8" had merit.

Booth, in stature, very much resembled Kean ; and being of a similar temperament, he naturally glided into the same school of acting, which caused some of the friends of the latter gentleman to accuse him of being an imitator ; but Booth afterwards dissipated this error, by enacting a portion of *Richard* according to his own idea and style of representation, and afterwards in that of Kean, exhibiting the several peculiarities of each.

In order to give the reader some idea of what we mean by a



particular model of playing, we will hazard the charge of dullness, by a few explanatory observations.

In the loftier walks of tragedy, there are two separate and distinct styles of acting, which may be distinguished as the *Cooke* and *Kemble* schools.

The former is remarkable for the total abstraction of the actor, in the character personified—for the complete abandonment of the individual, in the part represented—for its impulsive and energetic execution, and for the truthfulness with which it adheres to nature.

The latter is characterized by its chaste and classical attitudes—its unbending and statue-like stiffness, and its correct, but soulless embodiments.

The former is the result of genius and talent combined, copying nature with such unerring fidelity, that it becomes nature itself; the latter of talent, added to intense study and observation, and producing, in its effects, a great perfectibility of art. One is like the bright flashing of the lightning, that irradiates the earth with its splendor and startles by its brilliancy; the other, like the steady, luminous, and continuous light of the sun.

Kean and Booth both belonged to the *Cooke* school, combining many of the characteristics of *Kemble*, having much of the artistic finish and all of the scholar-like style of declamation. The instruction which Hamlet gives to the players regarding their acting, warning them not to “tear a passion to tatters,” nor, on the other hand, allow it “to come tardy off,” was admirably exemplified by both, and all who have seen Booth will acknowledge that he “suits the action to the word and the word to the action.”

But we return from this digression. Both theatres were now in the full tide of success, and the excitement engendered by the rival Richards was wrought to its highest pitch.

Soon after Mr. Booth's *débüt* at Covent Garden, Mr. Kean waited on him and congratulated him on his success. After con-

siderable conversation, he urged Booth to accompany him in his chariot\* to Drury Lane Theatre, where, upon his arrival, the committee of direction offered him an engagement, Mr. Kean promising to play counter-parts with him.

Flattered by the compliment, Mr. Kean being at that period one of the *lions* of the British stage, Mr. Booth was prevailed upon to accept the offer, and signed a memorandum to that effect.

He left Covent Garden, and appeared as *Iago* to Kean's *Othello*, on Thursday, the twentieth of February, to an overflowing house and amidst thunders of applause. Manfully did he act the part, dividing the plaudits with Kean, the friends of that gentleman vociferous in behalf of their favorite, and those of Booth equally zealous for their "little Silvius."

The excitement was immense. Placards were displayed through the streets of London—the press teemed with notices of the "Moor" and his "Ancient," and the one universal theme of conversation was the rival players, the Keanites considering their *protégé* the conqueror, and the Boothites, theirs.

Whichever bore off the palm of victory, however, it must be conceded that Kean had a decided advantage over his adversary. He was in the height of his success—in his favorite character—of a more mature age, and had long been the cynosure of all eyes. Booth, who was but a stripling, came before the audience from a rival theatre, in the most difficult† part, and before a con-

\* There is an old adage—"Put a beggar on horseback," &c. Mr. Kean, who, a few years previous, profited by a public subscription for his support at Dorchester, at his elevation as an actor at Drury Lane, kept his chariot, drawn by four horses, and attended by postillions. This ostentatious display was daily made in front of the theatre, where he might often have been seen, "shaking hands from his chariot windows, to a group of comedians, as eager to testify their supple homage as he seemed anxious to receive it."

† The sympathies of an audience naturally flow with the honest and deeply-injured Moor, while the representative of *Iago* has their prejudices to contend against. His infernal craft and villany shock the sensibilities,

course of new faces, to contend for the laurel which fame had wreathed around the brow of Kean.

His success, however, could not, of course, be satisfactory to all. Envy and jealousy surrounded him. Plodding dullness, without ambition, and successful merit, that could not brook a rivalry from a boy who snatched the chaplet of fame from the brow of age and experience almost without an effort, were arrayed against him; but detraction and injustice, though they clouded his prospects for a moment, but rendered his rising star of success the more brilliant by the dark shadows that surrounded it.

and the more life-like the performance is rendered, proportionably stronger becomes the prejudice. Indeed, it has been recorded of Mr. Cooke, that such was the profound dissimulation and treachery he manifested in the part, that on one occasion, he excited a *hiss*, which, considering its cause, was the highest compliment that could be awarded.

## CHAPTER II.

Second Night of "Othello"—Non-appearance of Booth—Cause of his Absence—His Letter to the Drury Lane Committee—Circular of the Covent Garden Management—Counter-Circular of the Drury Lane Proprietors—Booth's Note to Mr. Rae—Second Circular of the Covent Garden Management—Letter of Douglas Kinnaird to H. Harris—Booth's re-appearance in Richard, at Covent Garden—His Reception—Description of the Row—Booth's "Appeal to the Public"—Concluding Observations.

THE performance of "Othello," with Kean and Booth, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, was announced for repetition the following evening.

At an early hour the house was crowded to overflowing with one of the most fashionable attendances by which the boxes of Drury Lane were ever distinguished, and such was the excitement and curiosity to witness the performance, that a guinea was offered for a single seat.

When the curtain rose, however, Mr. Booth did not appear, but in his stead, Mr. Rae, the manager, who read a note from him, to the effect that he was ill. He also stated to the audience that Mr. Kean had consented to play *Iago*, and that he, Mr. Rae, would undertake the performance of *Othello*.

Considerable opposition to this arrangement arose, when, amidst the confusion, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester entered the house, and "God save the King" being called for, and sung with great effect, the audience became quiet, and the play was allowed to proceed without further interruption.

Various are the reasons assigned why Mr. Booth did not continue at Drury Lane, some contending that he was "afraid of Kean," as an actor, and others, that he had entered into an engagement with the managers of Covent Garden, upon their offer-



ing him the same terms as those at which his services had been secured at Drury Lane.

The truth of the matter, however, is, that after the first night of Booth's appearance at the opposition theatre, he discovered that there was a determined effort on the part of Kean and his friends to "put him down;" that he would not be allowed to play *Richard*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Bertram*, or any of Mr. Kean's parts, that gentleman having already monopolized all the characters in which he, Booth, was likely to succeed; and that the engagement into which he had been *wheedled*, was about the surest means to accomplish the end that his enemies had in view.

The excitement of mind produced by a knowledge of these facts, and the fear of not realizing those confident assurances of success which were manifested by his friends, incapacitated him from playing on the second night of announcement, and during the afternoon of Saturday he sent an apology to the manager.

Late in the evening of the same day, he despatched the following communication, explanatory of his reasons for returning to Covent Garden, to the Drury Lane Committee:—

"GENTLEMEN:—In an unguarded moment, I quitted Covent Garden Theatre (where the most eligible situation for the exertion of my professional talents was open to me), to go over to Drury Lane Theatre, where I have SINCE found and felt, to my cost, that every character which I was either desirous or capable of playing, was already in possession, and that there was no chance of my appearing in the same. What occasion, therefore, could you have for me, unless to crush any talent that I may possess in its infancy?"

"I have now seen through my error, and have, therefore, renewed the negotiation, which was so unfortunately interrupted, with the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, and have just signed a regular article with them for three years; consequently,

I have no longer the power of appearing again at Drury Lane Theatre, and you will have the goodness to take my name entirely out of your bills.

"I have heard, Gentlemen, that your treasury has benefited considerably from my appearance on Thursday last; I ask no pecuniary recompense for it; I only request that you will not seek to persecute or molest a young man just entering into life, and who cannot afford either to be shelved (according to theatrical phrase) at Drury Lane Theatre, or to be put in such characters as must infallibly mar all his future prospects.

"I have the honor to be, Gentlemen,

"Your very obedient, humble servant,

"J. B. BOOTH."

On the ensuing morning, the following placard was posted throughout the streets of London :—

"THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

"The public are respectfully informed, that Mr. Booth has satisfactorily arranged his differences with the Proprietors of this Theatre, and is engaged by them for three years. He will perform King Richard the Third on Tuesday next, Feb. 25, which character, for two successive nights, he had the honor to be called for by the audience to repeat."

This notice proved to be the first blow in a desperate but bloodless war between the rival houses, which, like those of "York and Lancaster," ever assumed a hostile attitude.

The following morning brought the annexed document before the public :—

[CIRCULAR.]

"*Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Monday, Feb. 24, 1817.*

"In consequence of the disappointment the public experienced

on Saturday night at Drury Lane Theatre, by the non-appearance of Mr. Booth in the character of *Iago*, and hand-bills having been posted yesterday (Sunday) in all parts of the town, stating that Mr. Booth had entered into an engagement with the Proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre for three years, the Manager of Drury Lane Theatre thinks it due from him to the public, to state, that on Monday last, the 17th instant, Mr. Booth signed a written engagement to Drury Lane Theatre for three years, on terms proposed by *himself*, having previously stated that he had no engagement with the Covent Garden Proprietors; that all treaty with that Theatre was at an end, and that he had requested his name to be taken out of their bills, which had accordingly been done, as appeared by the bills of that day. In pursuance of which engagement he performed the part of *Iago* on Thursday night, and was announced to repeat the character on Saturday, the 22d, Monday, the 24th, and Tuesday, the 25th instant. That about half-past three o'clock, on the afternoon of Saturday, the following note was received from Mr. Booth:—

“MR. BOOTH’S NOTE TO MR. RAE.

“*Saturday, Feb. 22, 1817.*

“‘ Mr. Booth presents his compliments to Mr. Rae, and is sorry to inform him that he finds himself so extremely ill from the agitation he has suffered during this last week, that it is totally out of his power to perform this evening, and that he is gone a little way out of town to restore his health.’

“ After receiving this note, the Manager was not prepared for another communication, which was made by Mr. Booth late on the same night in a letter to the Sub-Committee of Management, stating the fact of his having entered into a new engagement with the Proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, in pursuance of which the announcement was made of Mr. Booth’s appearance at that Theatre for to-morrow evening.

“ The Manager does not presume to make any comment on this most extraordinary proceeding, but leaves it to the public to draw its own conclusions as to the conduct of Mr. Booth, as well as that of the Proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, to whom his engagement at this Theatre has been notified, and who can have no legal claim to his services.”

This circular, issued by the Proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre, was followed by the publication of the annexed, from the rival house :

[CIRCULAR.]

“ *Covent Garden Theatre, Monday, Feb. 24, 1817.*

“ MR. BOOTH.

“ In reply to the Circular, dated Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Feb. 24th, the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre feel it incumbent on them to state to the public, the following facts :—

“ 1st. That Mr. Booth having performed two nights at Covent Garden Theatre, and a negotiation going on for a three years’ engagement, the Drury Lane Sub-Committee, previous to their opening a treaty with Mr. Booth, were bound, by long-established honorable agreement, to apply to the Covent Garden proprietors, and learn from them if such negotiation was broken off; but, contrary to such fair and open communication, they, in the absence of the Covent Garden proprietors, sent for Mr. Booth to the Committee-room, where he hastily signed a memorandum for an engagement; against which one of the Covent Garden proprietors, on his coming to town an hour afterwards, openly and vainly remonstrated with the Sub-Committee.

“ 2dly. That under such circumstances, the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, conceiving they had a lawful claim on Mr. Booth’s services, were about to take legal measures against him; when, through the medium of a friend of Mr. Booth, who saw his distress of mind in consequence of the perilous situation in which



he had rashly and unguardedly placed himself, the negotiation was renewed, and finally terminated on Saturday, when the Covent Garden proprietors would, with pleasure, have permitted Mr. Booth to perform for that evening at Drury Lane Theatre, but he was literally too ill to make the attempt.

“*3dly.* For the truth of the above statement, and for the justice of their case, the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre are ready to refer to any tribunal, competent to decide on theatrical questions; but whatever may be the result of the decision, the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre entreat that Mr. Booth may not be made the victim of disputes between the two Theatres; his youth and inexperience alone having placed him in a dilemma, from which, it is hoped, the usual candor and liberality of an English public will still rescue him.”

Annexed to the above, was a document, stating that a person was present at the meeting of a club, called the WOLVES, and that the whole party had “pledged themselves to drive MR. BOOTH from the stage,” but that the proprietors discredited the statement, believing that “such a dreadful combination surely never could exist; the severest punishment the laws could inflict, would be too lenient for such conspirators against an unprotected and inexperienced youth.”

As a proof of the accuracy of the statements made by the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, the following letter, to the manager, from the Honorable Douglas Kinnaird, was published in conjunction with it:—

“TO H. HARRIS, ESQ.

“32 Clarges Street, Feb. 24, 1817.

“MY DEAR SIR—The terms of the honorable agreement between the two Patent Theatres, to which you allude, I have no

difficulty in stating. I was made acquainted with them as soon as I was called upon to act as a member of the committee for managing Drury Lane Theatre ; and this act of our predecessors was confirmed by my colleagues and myself in the conviction of its being for our mutual benefit. I understood it to be distinctly agreed upon, that when either party became aware that the other Theatre had been in treaty with a performer within a year from such time, that they were first to ascertain from their rival that any such treaty was entirely at an end before they listened to any proposition from the performer.

“ I am, my dear sir,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ DOUGLAS KINNAIRD.”

On Tuesday, the 25th of February, Mr. Booth was announced for a resumption of *Richard the Third*, and the manager, anticipating a disturbance from the friends and patrons of the opposition house, at an early hour in the afternoon, had the affidavit of Mr. Jas. Salter, an attorney, who was the companion of Mr. Booth, on Saturday, posted near every avenue to the Theatre. This document declared that the tragedian was unwell, complained of sickness, and was not in a proper condition to perform on the second night, when announced to appear with Kean, at Drury Lane.

A house, crowded almost to suffocation, awaited Mr. Booth's reappearance at Covent Garden, and among the audience were several distinguished theatrical characters connected with the opposition house. Mr. Rae, the manager of Drury Lane, who occupied a front seat in the dress-circle, was greeted with shouts of applause, mingled with several decisive manifestations of displeasure.

When Mr. Booth came forward, dressed in character, he was instantly saluted by a combination of every sound that hostility

or approbation could suggest. As groans and hisses, however, are more effective in a theatre than the most rapturous applause, and as Mr. Booth was marked as a victim to the jealousies and malice of his enemies, who were sufficiently numerous, the rioters triumphed.

He endeavored to address the audience, but convinced of its impracticability, retired upon the approach of Mr. Fawcett, who endeavored to obtain a hearing, without success.

After his withdrawal, an attempt was made to proceed with the play, but in vain, and the drop curtain fell in a few minutes, for the close of the first act. In the meantime, a placard was displayed, upon a pole, which exhibited these words :—

“GRANT SILENCE TO EXPLAIN,”

when Mr. Booth came forward, alone, to profit by this explanation, but the tumult and noise prevented him. Another appeal was consequently exhibited :—

“MR. BOOTH IS WILLING TO APOLOGIZE.”

His enemies, however, resolved he should *not* be heard, and, of course, a hearing was denied him. This was followed by a third placard :—

“CAN ENGLISHMEN CONDEMN UNHEARD ?”

But as *rowdyism* and abuse are confined to no particular locality, the uproar continued unabated.

The tragedy, “curtailed of its fair proportions,” was finally got through with in dumb show, nothing being heard from the stage, and at its conclusion, Mr. Fawcett led Mr. Booth to the audience, where his friends greeted him with thunders of applause.

On the ensuing morning, the following was published and generally circulated :—

## “MR. BOOTH’S APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC.

“ *London, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 1817.*

“ It is with feelings of the most poignant grief that I found, by my reception at Covent Garden Theatre last night, that I had incurred the serious displeasure of a large proportion of the audience.

“ As far as I could judge, from my own observation, and that of my friends, the accusations against me were,

“ *First* : My having left one theatre, to renew my engagement in another. And, *Secondly* : A want of respect to the public, in not performing at Drury Lane on Saturday last. In regard to the first cause of complaint, I humbly submit, that most unexpectedly entangled as I have been, between the two theatres, and involved in a contest that older and wiser heads than mine might have erred in ; and as the whole matter will shortly be explained in a court of law, I earnestly entreat the public to wait for the result of that decision. Respecting the second, and, to me, by far the most serious charge, if I had been allowed the honor of a hearing, I think I could have satisfactorily explained to the audience that, in my delicate situation, between the clashing interests of the two rival theatres, I never could have been such a fool, or a madman, as to have done a *wilful* act to offend the public, by whose favor and support alone I was to exist in my profession.

“ For the cause of my absence from my duty on Saturday, I am ready to make the same affidavit which has been made already by Mr. Salter, who was with me at the time, viz : ‘ That on Saturday last, I did complain of severe indisposition, owing to the anxiety of mind, and the great fatigue I had suffered during the last week ; and that I was so seriously indisposed, that I found myself totally incapable of making the exertion necessary to perform that evening ; and that I wrote the same to Mr. Rae,



which letter was at Drury Lane Theatre by three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, which was time sufficient to have had hand-bills printed, to apprise the public of my incapability to perform, and prevent my being the cause of any disappointment to the audience.'

"Had I thought that such an unfair advantage would have been taken of my illness, and that it would have been insinuated from the stage, that my indisposition was feigned, rather than have been ungrateful to my benefactors, I would, at all hazards, have performed, even though death had been the consequence. But as in every month, and every week in the season, instances of apologies for performers, on the score of indisposition, are accepted, I could not imagine that on that plea I should be made the first dreadful example of public indignation. My punishment already has been severe; and surely a British public, a name synonymous with generosity, will not, for an involuntary error, combine to deprive a fellow citizen of the means of supporting himself and family.

"And again, I most earnestly conjure the public, that, if they still think me guilty of a fault, they will kindly bring to their recollection it is my *first*; and should they graciously grant me their indulgence, I pledge myself that it shall be the *last*. I will dedicate my whole life to their service, and ever remain

"Their most devoted and attached servant,

"J. B. BOOTH."

This apology, humble, and satisfactory to the intelligent portion of the public, did not produce the desired result, which is a sufficient proof, if any were wanting, that some other feeling besides disappointment at his non-appearance at Drury Lane, influenced the absurd and despicable conduct of a portion of the audience.



## CHAPTER III.

Circular of the Drury Lane Committee—Reply of the Opposition Management—Placard of Covent Garden Theatre—Fourth Appearance of Booth, as Richard, at Covent Garden—His Reception—Speech from the Stage—Opposition to Booth—Letter of Edmund Kean—Letter of Alexander Rae—Letter of John Fawcett.

THE day previous to that on which Mr. Booth's appeal was made, through the columns of the press, the following circulars appeared, which, as they form a part of the history of the times, may not prove devoid of interest to the reader:—

*“ Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Tuesday, Feb. 25, 1817.*

“ The managers of Drury Lane Theatre, having laid before the Sub-Committee of Management the posting-bill issued by Covent Garden Theatre this day, respecting Mr. Booth, have been instructed by them to declare that they never entered into, or knew of the existence of such an agreement as that which has been stated to the public on the authority of a letter from a late member of their own body. If such an agreement was ever entered into with the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, it must have been by that late member whose letter has been published, and who, on other occasions, singly acted in the name and authority of the whole Committee, without being authorized so to do. The implied understanding which has existed for many years between the theatres, was entered into for the purpose of preventing any tampering with and inveigling of each other's regularly articulated performers, and was never construed so oppressively to the profession, as to extend to actors positively discharged, or to those who had merely had an inconclusive negotiation.

“ If any proof were wanted of the truth of this statement, it is

found in innumerable instances, and particularly very lately in the instance of a celebrated actress (Mrs. Glover), who only quitted Drury Lane Theatre at the close of the last season, and yet performed at Covent Garden Theatre at the commencement of the present season, without any leave asked, or communication whatever, with the management of Drury Lane Theatre. Mr. Booth was discharged from Covent Garden Theatre at the close of last season ; he returned into the country, and there concluded an engagement with another manager upon proof of his entire discharge from his prior engagement.

“ If the mere appearance at the theatre, in a trial part, is to preclude all theatres from engaging the performer so appearing, for a year, it will be in the power of any manager to invite any celebrated provincial performer for a night, then offer him a salary totally inadequate to his merits, and thereby deprive the metropolis of his talent ; or, to use Mr. Booth’s own language, ‘ *shelve* ’ that performer for a whole year. An agreement that provided such a result, as also for that of preventing any performer, positively discharged, from pursuing his profession for a whole year in the metropolis, would not, in the opinion of the Committee, be a justifiable protection of theatrical property, but an attempt to oppress and enslave a respectable profession for no one laudable object.

“ This statement has been thought due to the public ; the question is now fully before them ; and the manager has received final instructions to take no further notice of any insinuations, misstatements, or calumnies, from whatsoever quarter they may come.”

The same day brought a response from the enemy’s councils.

“ *Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, Feb. 25, 1817.*

“ In the extraordinary situation in which the proprietors of this

theatre are placed by the license assumed by the *present* Committee of Drury Lane Theatre to disavow the acts of their predecessors, they are compelled to state to the public in corroboration of the direct and honorable confirmation their statement of Tuesday has received from a gentleman, who notoriously stood foremost in the confidence and in the active service of the proprietors of that theatre, that they are ready to prove that the late Mr. Sheridan entered into the agreement in question, whilst the late patent theatres were standing ; and that Mr. Whitbread adopted the same in the first year of his superintending the management of the present theatre. The Committee have been guilty of a *misstatement* in informing the public that the proprietors of this theatre engaged Mrs. Glover to perform for them, without previously ascertaining from one of the Committee, that no treaty was existing between that lady and the Committee.

“ If no act is to be held valid on the part of the *present* Committee which was not sanctioned by *every* member of the late body, the proprietors of that concern will best judge what would become of their property, when it is notorious that of their five members, during the greater part of last summer, only *one* ever attended the committee-room on the days of business ; and that after *another* member had returned from the circuit, *he and the aforesaid gentleman alone* conducted the business of the theatre for a considerable time.

“ The public will duly appreciate the depth of the reasoning and the ingenuity of the proof, that *theatrical talent must suffer*, from an honorable agreement between the two theatres, *that when either party becomes aware that the other has been within a year in treaty (much more in an engagement) with a performer, they shall first ascertain from that other party that such treaty is at an end, before they shall proceed to negotiate with the performer.*

“ If the Committee begin *now* to *feel the ill consequences* of their *own misconduct*, let them at once consult the *interests* of their *con-*



*stituents*, if not *their* own, and repair their error by binding themselves formally not to repeat it. If they do not, let them answer for the result to their body of proprietors. The proprietors of this theatre have no interest in such an agreement that is not common to both. But it is very easy for an amateur theatrical Sub-Committee, with independent fortune—no responsibility—and temporary power, to abolish laws, and make or annul agreements at their pleasure; but the proprietors of *Covent Garden Theatre*, like other traders in this great commercial country, being personally liable for their debts, feel it incumbent on them to act in their own defence, by which alone they can pay their creditors—uphold the drama—and contribute to the fair and rational amusement of the public.”

On the morning of the Wednesday following Mr. Booth's third appearance, the annexed notice was appended to the play-bills of Covent Garden Theatre :

“MR. BOOTH last Tuesday made his third appearance at this theatre, in the character of *King Richard the Third*. After repeated attempts to give an explanation to the audience, and implore them not to suffer an humble individual to be made the victim of disputes between the two theatres, no hearing was allowed him; but, as far as the proprietors could judge from the cheering at the dropping of the curtain, a vast majority of the audience was in his favor. MR. BOOTH will therefore perform *Richard* again on Saturday next, and throws himself on the mercy and liberality of Englishmen.”

In accordance with the above, Mr. Booth made his fourth appearance on Saturday the first of March, to an overflowing house. His *entrée* was made amidst the most tumultuous cheering, mingled with the hisses of his enemies. Boughs of laurel and *bouquets* in abundance fell at his feet, but the performance

was frequently interrupted by the noise of the hired ruffians that were in attendance. A placard was unfolded by one of the audience on which was printed :—

“ HE HAS BEEN PUNISHED ENOUGH, LET US FORGIVE HIM,”

which called forth various expressions of opinion. Some feeble cries of “apology !” resounded from the pit, to which Mr. Booth testified an unbending inattention and proceeded with his character. Mr. Fawcett, however, made the attempt to address the audience, but without success.

At the commencement of the second act, a paper was thrown to Mr. Booth from the pit, which he perused and retired to the stage door, from which, after a short conference, he returned hand in hand with Mr. Fawcett, who demanded if the public wish was that Mr. Booth should be heard, or otherwise.

A perfect torrent of applause seemed to justify an affirmative construction, when Mr. Booth, stepping forward, said :—

“Ladies and Gentlemen :—I have endeavored all in my power to atone for the disappointment to which I was instrumental in another place. I have apologized for my conduct on that occasion, and endeavored to explain the circumstances under which that conduct was influenced. I now again most humbly and sincerely repeat my apology.”

Mr. Booth then resumed his character, and proceeded through the second act under mingled hisses and applause.

He then re-appeared hand in hand, with Mr. Fawcett, as before, preceded by this inscription :—

“ MR. BOOTH CRAVES YOUR SILENCE TO EXPLAIN AND APOLOGIZE.”

This was immediately replied to, by the rise of another placard :—



“HEAR BOOTH, OF OLD DRURY, IN HIS PROPER PLACE,”

which occasioned great clamor and confusion.

Mr. Booth then succeeded in addressing the audience as follows:—

“Ladies and Gentlemen:—I have done everything in my power to express the sense I entertain of my offence, and I am willing to do so again in any way you shall suggest.”

But even this did not control the turbulence and noise of a portion of the audience, as the hired emissaries of Booth's enemies were *paid* to interfere with the performance.

The curtain fell, and immediately there was a simultaneous shout for Booth, who appeared, preceded by the following:—

“I HAVE ACTED WRONG ; I HAVE MADE AN APOLOGY, AND THROW MYSELF ON THE CANDOR OF ENGLISHMEN.”

The applause now became deafening, but Mr. Booth not being able to obtain a hearing, retired, and Mr. Fawcett announced a repetition of the play for the Monday following.

The opposition to Booth finally became allayed by the admiration which his extraordinary ability excited, and he was nightly greeted by the approbation of large and enthusiastic audiences.

The following letter of Mr. Kean, to the editor of one of the daily papers, will be read with interest:—

“SIR,—I think it my duty, in justice to a society of which I once had the honor of being a member, to refute a most malicious piece of calumny. The *Wolf Club* seems to have been the foil with which the friends of the *rival theatre* have, for the last two years, parried the public censure against their unsuccessful candidates. I wish, therefore, through the medium of the public

prints, to inform their *fears*, that such a society is no longer in existence, has not been for the last nine months, and when it was, the principles of the institution were founded on integrity and *universal philanthropy*.

"The misrepresentations with regard to this society laid before the public, rendered it unjustly an object of reprobation, and in acknowledgment of my duty to that public I resigned it.

"With regard to Mr. Booth, that I have the highest opinion of his talents, I gave proof, when I recommended his engagement to the Drury Lane Committee. If any one shall assert that I would individually or accessorially do anything detrimental to the interests of Mr. Booth, or any brother professionals, I should be happy in person to tell the propagator of such a report, that it is a FALSEHOOD.

"I remain, sir, with the greatest respect,

"Your obedient, humble servant,

"EDMUND KEAN.

"12 Clarges Street, Feb. 26, 1817."

From the mass of letters and circulars that were published in the daily papers, we subjoin the following, as being intimately connected with our subject.

"TO THE EDITOR.

"*Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Sunday, March 2, 1817.*

"SIR,—A communication has appeared in a paper of this day, repeating what has already been stated in almost every daily paper, 'that on Tuesday evening last, I was in one of the front boxes of Covent Garden Theatre, during the whole performance.' As the communication purports to come from the manager of the above theatre, it seems to convey an imputation that I went for the purpose of encouraging the opposition to Mr. Booth's performance; I, therefore, think it due to myself *individually* (though

restrained by positive orders from the Sub-Committee of Drury Lane Theatre, from making any further statement on *their* behalf) to affirm that I went there officially, by the acquiescence and sanction of the Sub-Committee, for the purpose (if Mr. Booth expressed any intention of returning to his duty at Drury Lane Theatre, which was not totally unexpected) of expressing their sentiments on the subject, and of generally explaining their motives and conduct, in answer to any attack that might have been made upon them from any quarter of the theatre. I solemnly declare, that I, neither by word or sign, took the least part in the tumult that prevailed, and, for the truth of this statement, I appeal to those who accompanied me, and to those who were near enough to observe me.

“I am, sir, with respect,

“Your humble servant,

“ALEXANDER RAE.”

We conclude the subject and the chapter, with the reply of the Covent Garden Manager:—

“TO THE EDITOR.

“*Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, March 3, 1817.*

“SIR,—Mr. Rae has complained of a paragraph, which states he was in the boxes at Covent Garden Theatre on one of the nights of riot, and he is pleased to attribute the offensive article to the manager of Covent Garden. If by the manager he means the humble individual who signs this, I beg to assure him he is in error, and I am sorry he who knows better, should make no distinction between the *Manager* and others who might have made the communication. Mr. Rae, by his own showing, came into the boxes with an intent to address the audience, if an opportunity had offered, *not of his own free will*, but sent by the *Sub-Committee of Drury Lane*. This disagreeable employment should have

taught him, that it is possible an acting manager may be obliged to do what he knows is not right. So that even had he thought I did write the article in question, fellow-feeling should have restrained him from bringing me before the public in the capacity of manager. Once for all, I disclaim it, as I do imputing to Mr. Rae anything improper or ungentlemanly. So that I sincerely wish that the Sub-Committee may still confide to him the task of addressing the audience at Covent Garden Theatre (if they think it decorous to continue the innovation), and that the prompter, the under music-copier, and other subordinates, may no longer be permitted to disturb their rival's house ; for certainly *they* have manifested that *they* do not know so well how to conduct themselves.

“The town must surely think it indecent, and highly disrespectful to *them*, for one theatre to send persons into the other to interfere. I believe no such commission would ever be offered to me by the proprietors of Covent Garden ; but I am free to confess, if such could be attempted, I would resist the mandate at all hazards ; for if I appeared in the lower boxes of Drury Lane for the purpose of addressing or disturbing the audience, I should expect what I should be convinced I deserved, to be turned out with contempt.

“I am, sir,

“Yours,

“JOHN FAWCETT.”

We hope the reader will not be tempted to exclaim with Mercutio, “A plague on both your houses !”



## CHAPTER IV.

Booth's Richard repeated—Kean in the same character—Their peculiar points and readings compared—Booth's Sir Giles Overreach—Remarks upon a "New Way to pay Old Debts"—Booth's Posthumus in "Cymbeline"—Production of the "Curfew"—Booth's assumption of Sir Edward Mortimer in the play of the "Iron Chest"—Revival of the "Conquest of Taranto"—*Début* in Edinburgh—Performance of Sir Giles—Letter to a Critic—Provincial Tour—Return to Covent Garden.

On the third and sixth of March, 1817, Mr. Booth repeated his performance of *Richard the Third* to overflowing houses, and though some slight disapprobation was manifested by his opponents, the applause throughout was long and enthusiastic.

At this period, Mr. Kean, in the representation of Richard, was considered the standard of perfection by which every new candidate for public favor was adjudged, and the critics, in comparing the merits of Booth with their model of excellence, highly extolled him, for the melody of his voice, his correct and appropriate gesticulation, his exhaustless physical strength and energy, and his originality of conception and execution.

Of course there were not wanting hireling pens to decry his abilities, particularly at a period when the Kembles were nightly attracting attention, and when the abilities of an actor seem, by a portion of the critics, to have been measured more by the height and dignity of his person, than by the possession of intellectual merit.

The sudden appearance of Kean, who, in defiance of the prejudices of the admirers of Kemble, adopted an entire new system

of acting, founded on that of Cooke, would have met but little favor from the press, had he not commanded admiration by his startling manifestations of genius, in the portrayal of deep and earnest passion. Mr. Kean's acting is said to have been most powerful in particular passages, and that at one moment, he almost inspired a feeling of disgust by his want of judgment or ability, and the next, challenged admiration by a sudden flash of intellectual brightness. In a notice of Mr. Kean's efforts in *Richard*, which we find in the *English Magazine*, published in 1820, the writer, after alluding to his extraordinary ability in several scenes, says :

"The most striking feature of Mr. Kean's connecting efforts was confined, upon his appearance in the *Tower*, to a vile habit of pausing between the members of a sentence, where no break should be allowed ; thus, when alluding to the sentiment that posterity will entertain of his crimes,—

---

‘ Will they not say, too,  
That to possess the crown, nor laws divine  
Nor human stop'd my way ? why, let 'em——say it ;’

and again :

‘ But did'st thou see 'em——dead ?’

"The anhelation of suspense,—while big and breathless with anxiety, so greatly portrayed by Mr. Kean's competitor at Covent Garden\* was here coldly kept out of sight, and we saw no ebullition of reported genius, till the fiery flashings-out of that spirit which, upon *Catesby's* intelligence, is doomed to animate the remainder of the scene. Here, indeed, a few straggling

\* "We have praised, and that highly, the great talents of Mr. Booth alluded to in this particular scene on a former occasion ; here, however, we can confidently repeat the most solemn assurance of its extraordinary extent."—*English Magazine*.

hisses have more than once reminded Mr. Kean of his mortality, but we are not inclined to advocate so rude a remembrancer of physical weakness."

One of Booth's finest scenes is in the second act, in which he manifested the possession of that extraordinary quickness of conception and power of execution, which have rendered him famous.

We quote, from the same work, a description of his manner of representing the scene:—

Enter Lieutenant, *hastily*.

*Lieu.* My lord, I beg your grace——

*Glo.* Begone, fellow : I'm not at leisure.

*Lieu.* My lord, the king your brother's taken ill.

*Glo.* *I'll wait on him !——*

Here Mr. Booth met the first question with a peevish reply, but having caught up the illness of his brother, burst upon the messenger with eagerness and exultation,

"Hold ye—where shall he keep his court?"

(*Here a sudden thought beamed upon the speaker's countenance, but quickly subsided,*)

"The Tower?"

Ay—(*with exulting decision*). The Tower!"

Mr. Booth's by-play was extremely felicitous in the above scene, and always commanded a lengthened peal of applause.

But while Kean appears to have depended more upon sudden and unexpected displays of genius, Booth presented a perfect succession of "brilliant," with a proper regard for the "setting." The only means of comparing the two actors, within our reach, we find in the criticisms on Kean's acting. One of his warmest

admirers, after having descanted at length upon his merits, says, "The monologue so dexterously interpolated from 'Henry the Fifth,' exhibits Mr. Kean in no favorable light as a fortuitous disclaimer. The start that follows his succeeding dream possesses but a flimsy title to praise, for though pregnant with facilities for forcible expression, Mr. Kean, at its most portentous juncture, drops his face upon his bosom, or buries it in his hands.\* Nor does he redeem this deficiency by superior merit in pronouncing the great renovation of 'Richard's himself again,' which, to reach its proper effect, demands a natural organ of more capacious power."

Mr. Booth in this same scene has won a reputation that will live as long as the play remains upon the stage. We find ourselves inadequate to do it justice. All that the reader can imagine of a display of concentrated agony, fear, and remorse, was exhibited in the convulsed form, the trembling limbs, the wildness of the eye, and the complete apparent prostration of every faculty.

In the manner of reading the text, Mr. Kean and Mr. Booth do not appear to have exhibited a corresponding judgment. Thus Mr. Kean was wont to say :—

"Into this breathing world scarce half made up,"

while Mr. Booth, knowing the previous word "*half*" compressed the whole sum of his calamity, placed the emphasis accordingly ; and again, Mr. Kean read :—

"Suspicion always haunts the guilty *mind*,"

\* Mr. Charles Kean, in Richard (a performance beneath criticism), follows the example of his father in this scene, but however much originality his parent may have possessed, the son has manifested no share of it.



while Booth emphasised the word *guilty*. Kean also said :—

“ If want of pity be a crime so hateful,  
Whence is it thou, fair excellence, art *guilty* ? ”

and Booth,

“ Whence is it *thou*, fair excellence, art guilty ? ”

In his interview with Lady Anne, at his entrance, Kean said :—

“ Ha ! still in tears ? Let ’em flow on ; they’re signs  
Of a substantial *grief*.”

but Booth,

“ Of a *substantial* grief.”

We might quote the character through, however, to prove their different methods of emphasis, for the only similarity between the two actors appears to have consisted in their personal appearance, in having adopted the same *rôle*, and the same school of acting.

Booth’s next appearance was as *Sir Giles Overreach*, in “ A New Way to pay Old Debts,” which proved equally attractive for many successive nights, and won for him the general admiration of all beholders.

This character, like that of Richard, is marked for its determined subjection of moral feelings to the individual will, and possesses “ hope in which there is no cheerfulness ; steadfastness within, and immoveable resolve, with outward restlessness and whirling activity ; violence with guile ; temerity with cunning ; and, as the result of all, interminableness of object with perfect indifference of means.”

All Sir Giles's ambition is upon the accomplishment of one end—the aggrandizement of his daughter ; and, like Richard, whose every idea is fixed upon the attainment of the crown, all other considerations are lost sight of in the pursuit. Sighs, nor tears, nor the rebukings of conscience, interrupt the bold and heartless determination of either.

It was in the delineation of bold and obdurate guilt, and agonizing remorse, that Booth was pre-eminent ; and amidst the most violent outbursts of passion, his sense of the importance of never violating nature and truth did not desert him.

His portraiture of Sir Giles, notwithstanding the many peculiarities of the character, has been considered by many judicious critics as the greatest effort of his genius ; yet we are not willing to award it more praise than some of his other assumptions. In fact, it is a matter of considerable question, whether Sir Giles ever had any prototype in nature. That a man should disregard the widow's curse, the orphan's prayer, his reputation here, and his hopes of a hereafter, merely to secure his daughter the title of "Right Honorable," is, in our opinion, a stretch of the imagination of the poet, not warranted by truth ; still, the character of Sir Giles is one that embraces an ample field for the display of those passions, in the delineation of which Mr. Booth was so successful.

How admirably he delivered the sarcastic language with which the part abounds, and how truly his mien and actions corresponded with the knavish disposition of Sir Giles, those only who have witnessed him can conceive.

His interviews with Marrall ; his delight at the marriage, which he thinks will secure his daughter's connection with Lovell ; his dismay and astonishment when he discovers the deed without a signature, and his mental distress when he finds his hopes and plans blasted, have never been depicted by any actor with more power and truth.

In the last scene, wherein he utters the following, and rushes madly towards his daughter, his fiend-like countenance and infuriated rage, no language can properly describe:—

“————— Shall I then fall  
Ingloriously and yield? No! spite of fate  
I will be forc'd to hell, like to myself!  
Though you were legions of accursed spirits,  
Thus would I fly among you.”

Richard and Sir Giles were repeated, alternately, until the 15th of March, when Shakspeare's play of “*Cymbeline*” was produced with Booth as *Posthumus*, Mr. Young as *Iachamo*, and Mr. Charles Kemble as *Polydore*. This new assumption of Booth's obtained for him the warmest eulogiums, and was repeated almost weekly during the season.

We find the impossibility of noticing, at length, all of Mr. Booth's characters, and shall, therefore, confine our remarks to those parts in which we have witnessed him.

Towards the close of the month, a romantic drama, called “*The Curfew*,” was revived, for the purpose of introducing Mr. Booth in the part of *Fitzharding*, a character “endeared to its spectators by the ardor of his courage and the intensity of his sufferings.” His performance was honored by loud and vehement applause, and at the conclusion of the piece, Mr. Henry Harris and Mr. Fawcett proceeded to the dressing-room of Mr. Booth, and congratulated him on the success of his efforts.

On the eleventh of April, Coleman's “*Iron Chest*” was announced, with Booth as *Sir Edward Mortimer*, in which he added another laurel to his brow.

This character, the original of which the reader will find in Godwin's novel of “*Caleb Williams*,” is well developed, although the play, considered entire, is decidedly of a melo-dramatic cast.

There is scope, however, for fine acting. The jealousy of honor, which Sir Edward betrays, the description of the circumstances of his life, and his revenge and remorse, afford an opportunity for the display of an actor's powers.

One of the finest points in Booth's representation was the scene in the library, in which he discovers Wilford examining the contents of the chest. The look with which he regards his secretary, the paroxysm of terror and revenge, and the manner of administering the oath, were perfect triumphs of the actor's art.

It was in the representation of highly excited passion, of bursts of frantic rage, or the agony of unutterable feeling, that Mr. Booth was remarkable. In deep and malignant sarcasm, in the portrayal of triumphant villainy, or brooding hate, we doubt if he ever had a superior ; while the regard that he paid to the consistency and harmony of the characters represented, was equally creditable to his taste and judgment.

Shortly after the production of the "Iron Chest," the "Conquest of Taranto" was performed, Mr. Booth sustaining the part of *Rinaldo*, Mr. Macready, *Valentio*, and Mr. Young, *Aben Hamet*, and was represented with great success, for several successive nights.

The plot of the piece was taken from a French play, and the language, though not devoid of beautiful passages, is bombastic and inflated. Mr. Booth, however, won much deserved applause in his embodiment of *Rinaldo*.

The characters that we have already enumerated, were sustained by Mr. Booth, during the season, to large and admiring audiences, notwithstanding John Philip Kemble was very attractive at the same house, and Kean was equally successful at Drury Lane.

At the close of the season, Mr. Booth went on a provincial tour, and in November, 1818, made his first appearance in Edin-



burgh, at the Theatre Royal, as *Richard the Third*, to a large and fashionable audience. This was followed by *Sir Giles Overreach* and *Hotspur*, in both of which characters he won great praise from the greater portion of the audience; but he had still to contend against the friends of Kean, some of whom displayed their critical acumen through the columns of the press.

A critic in the *Edinburgh Reflector*, in noticing his performance of *Sir Giles Overreach*, after charging him with being an imitator of Kean, says: "His best scene was that in which he anticipates his daughter's marriage with Lord Lovell, when he is 'full of joy; nay, joy all over.' He was here exceedingly effective, and was greeted with the loudest plaudits, as, in fact, he was throughout the whole performance, at intervals, and the curtain fell amidst tumultuous cheering."

It was rather surprising, if Mr. Booth was such a decided imitator of Kean, that the astute and learned audiences of the classical city of Edinburgh should have "greeted" him "with the loudest plaudits throughout the whole performance," and the charge falls to the ground, when we reflect that Mr. Booth's most masterly and unapproachable assumption, *Pescara*, Mr. Kean never attempted.

The following characteristic letter published in the *Caledonian Mercury*, shows that he was not entirely proof against the attacks of the *MacGrawlers* of the press, whose similar efforts at criticism crushed the spirit of poor Conway:—

"To the Author of the articles called 'The Drama,' contained in the first numbers of the *Edinburgh Reflector*.

" 'I do despise them,  
For they do prank them in authority  
Beyond all noble sufferance.'—*Shakspeare*.

"It was with an intention to falsify the assertions, and *evidently*

to repel the attacks of people like yourself (who, through the medium of some publication, wish to palm themselves upon the world as Judges and Dramatic Censors), that I *condescended*, for the first time, to give an imitation\* of your Leviathan. By this mode only, it was suggested to me, I should be exculpated in the public mind, and throw malevolent and ill founded attacks on my professional attempts to the ground. In the opinion of those present, *to my own satisfaction*, I convinced them my efforts *were* original (or more so than your vile copied trash of Hazlitt's).

"I am too proud—too impatient, to descend to an imitation of any actor I have yet seen, but for the purpose of refuting *hired* calumny. My personal resemblance to the reigning actor of the present day, is, by me, considered a curse, as it has proved a bar to me in my profession, in affording a *clue* for the hirelings of the press to *form* their attacks, *in perceiving* many unreflecting people believed what such reports said of my exertions, by a sensible decrease in attraction, solely owing to such remarks remaining uncontradicted. By your aspersions I am called on to answer you. *I here distinctly avow* there is not a word of truth or judgment in your articles on theatrical criticism. It would behove the editor or publisher of the Reflector to choose a writer who comprehended what he wrote about, without being biased by a *good dinner*, or *half a guinea*.

"If your knowledge of political and literary matter be as profound as that you *profess* concerning actors, Mr. Hazlitt says, he'll turn *Reflector*, or anything.

"The *critical scribbler* quotes, in his title page, this *apology*—you know the work :—

‘For I am nothing, if not critical.’

\* Booth played Richard, or a part of it, “in imitation of Kean,” to prove that his own idea of the character was original.

I say no apology is wanting; but a slight alteration would improve it for him and you—

“If you’re critical” (you mean), “you’re nothing.”

“Wishing you may experience good for evil, by always meeting the lenity that *learned Dux Stultorum*\* lately received, though ill deserving it,

“I remain your obedient,

“J. B. BOOTH.”

From Edinburgh, Mr. Booth visited the principal cities, and was everywhere received and regarded with the same admiration and delight that had been bestowed on Edmund Kean. Indeed, at Brighton, Birmingham, Bristol and Bath, he proved more attractive, and commanded more regard than that celebrated actor.

The ensuing season he returned to Covent Garden.

\* As Mr. Hazlitt was called upon by *Mr. Conway* to apologize for certain remarks, in the form of Dramatic Criticism, made in his “View of the English Stage,” a few years previous, which he publicly did, we presume Mr. Booth came in for *his* share of abuse from that eccentric individual.

## CHAPTER V.

Miss O'Neill—Her early days—First performances—*Débüt* in Dublin—Incident during the performance of "Timour the Tartar"—Her various characters—*Débüt* in London—Success in the provinces—Her performance of Monimia—Her efforts in comedy—Her retirement from the stage—Laughable anecdote of Mr. Coates—Miss O'Neill's efforts as an actress—Opinions of the critics—Extraordinary attraction at Covent Garden—Production of the "Apostate"—Mr. Booth's refusal of Pescara—Mr. Macready's assumption of the character—His success—Opinions of the critics and the author relative to his merits as an actor—His managerial efforts.

THE management of Covent Garden Theatre was fortunate enough, about this period, to secure the services of Miss O'Neill, whose successful performances of *Juliet* and *Jane Shore*, at the Dublin Theatre, had met with unqualified approbation.

Indigence and obscurity seem to have marked the early history of the majority of histrionic performers, and this beautiful and accomplished actress was not an exception. She was reared in poverty, and her education she won by her own exertions, having no other instruction than that which she received from her mother. Genius, however, is powerful against all obstacles, and seems to glow the brightest when chilled by penury.

She was born in Drogheda (Ireland), on the twenty-eighth day of December, 1793, and a respectable tradesman in the place mentions that he has "often seen the 'little *cratur*' running *bare-foot* about the streets."



Her first performances were displayed at Belfast, where, having evinced the possession of extraordinary talent, she was engaged for the Dublin Theatre, and made her first appearance as *Widow Cheerly*, in Cherry's comedy of "The Soldier's Daughter."

The season previous, the theatrical taste being in rather a vitiated condition, "Timour the Tartar" was produced, and Miss O'Neill was prevailed upon to play the heroine *Zorilda*.

Among the theatrical properties was an admirably-shaped figure of a colossal elephant; in each leg was placed a boy, whose movements were carefully contrived to imitate the action of the real animal. Immediately after its introduction on the scene, and while *Blue Beard*, the ungallant slayer of female beauty, was fretting and ranting on his back, the under-prompter ran into the green-room, seeking for the manager, with the utmost consternation displayed in his features; on finding him, he dolefully exclaimed, "Oh Lord, Sir! the right leg of the elephant has got blind drunk, and is boxing on the stage with the left, which is fast asleep all the while, dreaming about nothing at all, at all, and Mr. *Abomilique* doesn't know what to do with the beast." "Return instantly," exclaimed the mimic monarch, "discharge the two fore-legs and put the hind ones in their place."

Miss O'Neill's second effort, in which she was most successful, was *Portia*, in the "Merchant of Venice," which was succeeded by *Oriana*, in Farquhar's comedy of the "Inconstant," and *Blanche*, in the "Lady of the Lake." On the performance of the latter piece, *Fitz James* was represented by Mr. Conway, and considered one of his happiest efforts. She afterwards assumed various other characters, among which was *Beatrice*, in "Much Ado about Nothing;" *Volumnia*, in "Coriolanus;" *Lady Townley*, in the "Provoked Husband;" *Mrs. Haller*, in the "Stranger;" and *Lady Macbeth*.

On the sixth of October, 1814, she made her *début* in London, as *Juliet*, at Covent Garden Theatre,\* Conway playing *Romeo*, to an enthusiastic audience ; and it is mentioned as having been one of the most successful first appearances on record.

She played nightly to crowded and admiring audiences, and her salary was progressively raised, until it amounted to thirty pounds per week.

Her success at the provincial theatres was equally remarkable, and at Portsmouth, she was in receipt of seventy-five pounds per week for her services, when the elder Kean, who was not at all diffident about demanding exorbitant prices, received but fifty.

Her range of characters at this period was in the loftier walks of tragedy, and great praise was awarded for her powerful acting in *Juliet*, *Belvidera*, and *Jane Shore*.

On the second of December, 1815, Otway's tragedy of the "Orphan" was performed, with Conway as *Polydore*, Charles Kemble as *Castalio*, and Miss O'Neill as *Monimia*. In the *Theatrical Inquisitor*, we find the following notice of her performance :

"Miss O'Neill, as *Monimia*, fully answered our most sanguine anticipations, and we shall select one passage of her performance, which, alone, afforded a most delicious treat to the intelligent observer. We allude to that in which she discloses her marriage to *Polydore* :

" ' Oh ! I am his wife :  
I am Castalio's wife ! "

was delivered in a manner that beggars all description. To deli-

\* An admirer of Miss O'Neill's beauty has thus vented his feelings in rhyme :—

" Ah ! would I were in *Conway's* place,  
Poor *Romeo's* part enacting ;  
Yet looking but in *Juliet's* face,  
I should forget my acting."

neate the various expressions of her countenance is utterly impossible. She presented us with a most exquisitely finished picture of a sensitive mind in one of the most distracting situations. Madness and distress were portrayed in every feature. The emotion of her frame, the anguish of her look, the frenzy of her action, depicted the various conflicts of passion, so combined at one moment as to cause a revulsion in the human frame which overwhelmed the senses, and choked the utterance in a whirlwind of despair."

In 1816 she attempted a different cast of characters, and her first effort as *Lady Teazle*, in the "School for Scandal," created as much excitement and enthusiasm as was manifested on the night of her *début*. She afterwards performed the *Widow Cheerly*, *Mrs. Oakley*, and *Lady Townley*, but the manager, finding that she did not prove as attractive in comedy as in tragedy, induced her to resume the representation of her previous characters, to which were added several others, that won for her the most enthusiastic praise. Among them, that of *Florinda*, in the "Apostate," and the heroine in "Evadne," were pronounced faultless.

In the year 1819, she married W. Becher, M. P., and left the profession to which she was attached, much to the regret of all true lovers of the drama. Unlike the majority of theatrical performers, to the credit of her taste, her retirement was made without the usual *farewell* from the stage.

This absurd custom, as ridiculous as it is heartless, though so generally adopted, was carried to a laughable extent by Kean, who made "his last appearance previous to his retirement from the stage," and after having expressed his *gratitude*\* to the public,

\* The idea of an actor feeling any gratitude to the public, savors very strongly of *humbug*. If the audience did not expect to obtain the worth of their money, they would never enter the theatre, and the actors would be more than men if they consented to play without being paid for it.

Let a performer without any histrionic merit at all, appear, and though



again appeared some time afterwards, to retire a second time, and renew his appeal to the sympathies of the audience.

We can imagine nothing more ridiculous than this, unless it be an incident that once occurred in England, at the Richmond Theatre, when Mr. Coates was representing the love-sick Romeo. The enthusiasm of the audience at his *exquisite* acting was so great, that in the death scene many voices cried out *encore !* when, to the astonishment and delight of every one, Mr. Coates, taking the word in its literal sense (thinking it a high compliment to his *unrivalled* talents), actually *died over again !!!*

Miss O'Neill's success on the stage was most extraordinary, having realized twelve thousand pounds a year by her professional services, the whole profits of which, it is said, were distributed by her among her numerous relations. As an actress, she was considered the greatest of the age in which she lived. An excellent critic has said, "She had not the pathos, nor the deep insight into the human heart that Miss Kelly possesses, but she had more dignity and a higher tone of acting."

"In *Jane Shore*, *Belvidera*, *Mrs. Beverly*, and *Monimia*, she gave her auditors no time to think, but carried them with her ; her griefs became theirs, and reflection was lost in sympathy," and another writer, in speaking of her, has remarked that "sadness rather than grandeur was her forte ; youthful passion, rather than maternal affection. Yet, occasionally, there was a dignity about her which approximated to the majesty of Mrs. Siddons." Another of her admirers has written, that "she was a lovely,

exemplary as a saint in private life, and possessed of as many children as the famous John Rogers, and poor as poverty withal, he would be *hissed* from the stage, the audience, of course, not estimating his services so highly as their money. Talent, like other articles of merchandize, sells according to its value, and the actor feels the same gratitude to the audience as the shopkeeper does to his customer, whose object it is to get his goods to the best possible advantage.



ardent creature, with whose griefs we sympathized, and whose sorrows raised our pity;" and a third, that "as an actress she had no successor worthy of comparison with her, and, at her secession from the stage, may be said to have departed the Juliet of the poet, though many an aspirant has since become the Juliet of the stage."

In private life, her conduct was exemplary, and "without reproach," and she escaped the contamination to which a theatrical life so unavoidably exposes an actress, though the lures of titled and wealthy libertines were not unemployed to tempt her. But we return to Mr. Booth.

The manager of Covent Garden, wishing to introduce an array of talent in one piece, consisting of Mr. Booth, Mr. Young, Mr. C. Kemble, and Miss O'Neill, applied to Richard Sheil, to write a play in which they might all appear in conjunction. The tragedy of the "Apostate" was produced, accepted by Mr. Harris, and cast as follows:—

Hemeya,	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. C. Kemble.</i>
Malec,	.	.	.	.	" <i>Young.</i>
Pescara,	.	.	.	.	" <i>Booth.</i>
Florinda,	.	.	.	.	<i>Miss O'Neill.</i>

After four rehearsals, Mr. Booth declined performing the part of *Pescara*, because he thought Kemble's and Young's characters were superior; or was it not, rather, that he desired to play *Hemeya*, for the purpose of making love to the beautiful O'Neill?

If the former be the reason, his opinion certainly underwent a most extraordinary change, for he afterwards played it with such success, that he made it entirely his own.

The manager, annoyed and chagrined by this whim of the tragedian, was compelled to submit, and there being no one else

connected with the establishment, in his opinion, capable of playing the part, he was subjected to considerable perplexity.

The stage manager suggested Mr. Macready, who undertook the character ; but the piece at first met with indifferent success, that actor not being held in high estimation in London, although a star of the first magnitude in the provinces. The public, however, discovered much merit in his performance of Pescara, and the impression that he made raised him to an elevated position in the histrionic art. From this time forward, he stood at the head of his profession, though considered by the critics a melo-dramatic, and by the public a legitimate actor.

The secret of Mr. Macready's success lies in the high degree of artistical finish that marks all his performances, every look and action being the result of careful and elaborate study ; added to which, is the magnificence of his costumes, which not even their inaptitude would induce him to cast aside.

His voice is husky, and often indistinct, and his action, studied and artificial. He lacks ease. His performances are destitute of soul. There is none of the fire and spirit of genius in his composition, but he is cold, declamatory, and monotonous.

One of his biographers, with much judgment, has said, " Mr. Macready is not generally successful in Shakspeare. *Othello*, *Iago*, and *Jaques*, prove our assertions ; and his *Hamlet* is not satisfactory. \* \* \* \* \*

" Like Edmund Kean, he succeeds best where he has much to imply, little to enunciate : for he ceases to act when he begins to declaim. There is a catching of the breath, somewhat resembling a burr in his enunciation, that is painful to the hearer ; his low tones, as a critic has somewhere said of a certain singer's diminuendo notes, are so exceedingly confidential, that they seldom penetrate beyond the ear of the orchestra."

Mr. Macready, however, has done much for the revival of the legitimate drama in latter years. During his management, he produced a number of Shakspeare's\* plays with great success, and various other pieces which have maintained their place upon the stage. Among the original characters which he has enacted, are *Ludovico*, in "Evadne ;" *Gambia*, in the "Slave ;" *Rob Roy*, *Virginius*, *Caius Gracchus*, and *William Tell*, parts which we consider better adapted to his style of acting than those of Shakspeare.

\* It is mentioned as a curious fact, that John Philip Kemble, who was celebrated for his efforts in producing Shakspeare's plays in a classic style upon the stage, always introduced the modern composition of "See the Conquering Hero comes," on the triumphant entrance of Coriolanus, after the defeat of the Volscii. Its appropriateness may well be questioned, as Coriolanus was sleeping with his mother earth some centuries before the composer was born.

## CHAPTER VI.

Revival of "King Lear" at Covent Garden Theatre—Cast of Characters—Booth's Lear—Tate's Alteration—Addison's opinion of the Character—Kemble's Edgar—Macready's Edmund—Fawcett's Kent—Miss Booth's Cordelia—The "Lear of Private Life" at the Cobourg—Engagement of Booth—His success as Fitzharden—Mr. Booth's Position—Occasional Reflections—"King Lear" at Drury Lane—Kean's exorbitant Demands—His success in Lear—Secession of Booth from Covent Garden and Engagement at the Cobourg—Production of "Horatii and Curiatii"—Its marvellous Success—Booth's imitation of Kean—His Engagement at the East London Theatre—Visit to Amsterdam—His Engagement and sudden Disappearance—"Dutch" without a Master—His performance of Macbeth—Approbation of the Prince of Orange—His performance of Iago—Re-appearance with Kean at Drury Lane—Return to the Cobourg—Visit to Madeira—His favorite "Peacock"—Departure for America.

THE tragedy of "King Lear" had not been represented for many years in England, its performance having been prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, who had discovered some affinity or resemblance between the madness of Shakspeare's monarch and that of George the Third, who, for a period of ten years, was a confirmed maniac.

His death removed the restriction that had been issued, and the play was immediately put into preparation at both the large Theatres. It was represented, at Covent Garden, on the 13th of April, 1820, with the following powerful cast of characters :—



King Lear,	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Booth.</i>
Edgar,	.	.	.	.	.	" <i>C. Kemble.</i>
Edmund,	.	.	.	.	.	" <i>Macready.</i>
Kent,	.	.	.	.	.	" <i>Fawcett.</i>
Cordelia,	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Miss Booth.</i>

Such a combination of talent in one of Shakspeare's master efforts, of course, drew immense houses.

Mr. Booth's *Lear* proved to be one of the proudest efforts of his genius. His execution of this character was transcendentally beautiful. It requires no ordinary mind to properly conceive it. Shakspeare himself seems to have been prodigal of his genius in painting the aged king.

The scene in which he is abandoned and turned out to "bide the pelting of the pitiless storm," is one of terrific grandeur. The dethroned monarch, "more sinned against than sinning," in his madness, invoking the fury of the elements, as drawn by Shakspeare, presents a picture almost, if not entirely, unequalled in dramatic composition, which no one but the "poet of all time" could have produced.

How admirably Booth represented this scene, no one who ever witnessed him can forget, and his recitation of the following passages amidst the storm and darkness, was almost sublime :

"Blow, wind, and crack your cheeks ! rage ! blow !  
 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
 'Till you have drench'd our steeples !  
 You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,  
 Vaunt couriers to oak-cleaving thunder-bolts,  
 Singe my white head !"

And again, when Goneril urges him to lessen his attendants, how truthful was the impetuous rage that he manifested :—

“Darkness and devils !

Saddle my horses, call my train together,

Degenerate viper ! I'll not stay with thee.”

But how shall we describe the awful impressiveness of the curse on Goneril at the close of the first act, which he uttered with such powerful effect ?

It would be impossible, however, without occupying more space than would be compatible with the intention of the author of this work, to particularize the many and varied beauties that abounded in his representation of Lear.

Booth conceived and executed the character with admirable judgment. He made him a weak and fond old man, hasty and impetuous in his feelings, as quick in his susceptibility to offence as he was eager and ardent in his attachments. Urged by the ingratitude of his daughters, he goes forth, blending together the most incongruous associations, but never forgetting for an instant, the disobedience of his children, every circumstance calling it to his remembrance.

The interviews with Edgar were painfully natural, and wrought to an intensity worthy of the poet who created them. Indeed, it would be difficult to particularize any part of the performance, where Booth was unequal to the character.

It was a subject of regret that he adopted the alterations\* of

\* The “step from the sublime to the ridiculous,” was never a shorter one, than in Tate’s alteration of *King Lear*. With the most consummate conceit of his ability, to improve upon the great poet of all nature, he has made the injured King, “a thing of shreds and patches,” and stuck upon he royal robes of majesty, the ragged patchwork of poverty, making him, after all, but a mountebank that merely sports with our sympathies ; still worse, Cordelia is converted into a strolling love-sick damsel, who makes love in a storm, and indeed “wastes her sweetness on the desert air.”

“And my poor fool is hanged,” cries the expiring Lear of *Shakspeare*, but had he known that the mighty genius of *Nahum Tate* could have

Tate, who with presumptive hand boldly stripped the play of Lear's death, a subject which in the hands of such an actor as Booth, might have been rendered one of the most interesting features of the piece.

Addison, in one of his essays in the *Spectator*, says:—"King Lear is an admirable tragedy as Shakspeare wrote it; but as it is reformed, according to the chimerical notion of poetic justice, in my opinion, it has lost half its beauty."

After Lear's misfortunes—at his mature age—with mind and body worn out, the picture of his death and that of Cordelia, as drawn by Shakspeare, is sublimely touching.

Why the Shaksperian Booth should have adopted the preposterous text of Tate, who restores him to health and reason, is one of those problems which we have never been able to satisfactorily solve.

Of Mr. Charles Kemble's *Edgar*, we cannot perhaps do better than quote the remarks of a judicious critic:—

"Mr. C. Kemble was perfect in *Edgar*. The assumed maniac, like Caliban, is an imaginary being wholly out of nature, and therefore not subject to dramatic rules. As Shakspeare trusted to his imagination to conceive, so must the actor to represent, this singularly wild and romantic creation of poetic fancy. Mr. Charles Kemble's appearance was highly picturesque. He was a figure that Salvator Rosa would have delighted to contemplate."

*Edmund* found an admirable representative in Mr. Macready, whose artistical and finished style of execution is allowed even by his enemies.

Mr. Fawcett's performance of *Kent* was all that could be im-  
restored his own broken heart to him, whole again, and returned him his lost kingdom, he would probably have asked for his "fool" again, even though he *had* been hanged; but Mr. Tate, deeming *one* fool sufficient, has presented himself in that character, for the admiration of posterity.

aged or desired from an actor, who, in a certain line of characters, was without an equal. An astute critic, speaking of his acting said, that "he is serious without being pompous, and his comic touches go sometimes more to the heart than the most studied efforts of the tragic delineator."

Of Miss Booth's *Cordelia*, we find the most extravagant notices of her performance. Her figure was small, but very well formed ; and to adopt the words of one of her admirers, "her face (if we may use the expression) full of tongues. All her features were lit up with expression, and conveyed her thoughts before her tongue could utter them."

"King Lear" was represented three nights a week, for several successive weeks.

The minor theatres, at that period, having been forbidden to play the regular drama, and the inhabitants of London and its purlieus being "*Lear mad*," Mr. Glossop, of the Cobourg Theatre, produced a melo-drama, some of the incidents of which resembled those of "King Lear." The piece was founded on Mrs. Opie's admirable tale of "Father and Daughter," and called the "*Lear of Private Life*."

Mr. Glossop also secured the services of Booth, who played *Fitzharden* three nights a week, being, in theatrical parlance, the "off nights" of his engagement at Covent Garden, producing the same sensation on one side of the Thames, in that character, that he did in Shakspeare's *Lear* on the other.

His performance of *Fitzharden* is spoken of as being one of the finest efforts of his genius, embodying, as it did, those peculiar traits of feeling and mental ability, for which he was celebrated.

For weeks, the Cobourg was filled with large and enthusiastic audiences, whose tears were an acknowledgment of the power of this master of the passions, while on alternate nights, the boxes



of Covent Garden were lined with the beauty and fashion of London.

Mr. Booth had now reached the highest pinnacle of fame, and bore his "blushing honors thick upon him." With a face strikingly handsome, every feature of which was illuminated with intellectual beauty—with a natural genius and aptitude for his art—with a voice susceptible of every change of modulation, and which never failed him—with a constitution of herculean strength, he entered upon a career which promised nothing but success. The ardent aspirations of youthful ambition seemed about to be realized, and fame and fortune were at his feet; but after gaining the steep ascent upon which he had fixed his longing eye, lighted with the beams of genius and of hope, like Cooke and Kean, he has lived to see his star obscured by the mists of error, with "shadows, clouds and darkness" resting upon it.

What he *might* have been is a problem of easy solution, when we behold him "with all his imperfections on his head," even now, the most truthful representative of Shakspeare that graces the stage. What might he not have been, had time mellowed instead of blighting the fruit of that transcendant genius, which promised such a glorious harvest? Alas! instead of being like some proud Grecian Temple, grand in its chaste simplicity, winning the admiring gaze of all beholders, we find him but a splendid ruin, whose glory lies but in the associations which it engenders.

On the 24th of April, *King Lear* was produced at Drury Lane with more splendor and more regard to costume and scenery, Mr. Kean enacting *Lear*; Mr. Rae, *Edgar*; Mr. Hamblin, *Edmund*; Mr. Dowton, *Kent*; and Mrs. W. West, *Cordelia*. Both houses were nightly crowded to excess.

Mr. Kean, conscious of his attractive powers, and availing himself of the excitement, demanded and received fifty pounds per night, a most exorbitant sum for the services of any actor in

those days, if not in ours. He likewise required a stipulation that his name should always appear in large letters, in the bills announcing the performance, which, *en passant*, was the first introduction of that custom in London ; also, that no actor should be allowed to enact any part in his list of characters. He played Lear consecutive nights during a period of six weeks, to houses enormously crowded.

Soon after the production of "King Lear," Booth left Covent Garden and enlisted with Mr. Glossop, at the Cobourg, where the play of the *Roman Father* altered to "Horatii and Curiatii," was produced in a style of gorgeous and unequalled magnificence ; the scenery and dresses surpassing any previous production at the London theatres.

The scenic effect was of the most imposing description, and the costumes, decorations, and properties, were prepared without regard to expense, and with a strict adherence to historical truth.

This attraction, added to Booth's personation of the *Roman Father*, which he represented in the most effective manner, drew nightly crowded houses, until it had had an unprecedented run of *sixty nights*, resuscitating the treasury of the theatre several thousand pounds.

The soul and pathos that Booth threw into this part commanded universal admiration, and on each succeeding night the interest rather augmented than diminished.

After the withdrawal of "Horatii and Curiatii" Booth continued to play three nights a week. On the evening of his benefit, here and elsewhere, he invariably enacted *Richard the Third* and *Jerry Sneak* in the "Mayor of Garratt," and between the performance of the tragedy and farce, recited the opening soliloquy of the former :—

"Now is the winter of our discontent," &c.,

in imitation of Edmund Kean, and afterwards, according to his

own method, showing the difference in their peculiar styles of acting—thus rebutting the charge of being a copyist.

The success which followed the performances of Booth at the Cobourg, excited the jealousy of the proprietors of the Patent theatres, and consequently an attempt was made to suppress the Minor Drama, by bringing suits against the manager of the Cobourg. It was contended that "Richard the Third," as performed at Mr. Glossop's establishment, was no melo-drama, but a regular tragedy.

From a letter of the Manager to the editor of a theatrical journal, we quote the following:—

"The melo-dramatizing and performing of 'Richard the Third,' at the Cobourg, for the purpose of displaying the great talents of Mr. Booth, is, it seems, the offence that has thus suddenly drawn down the hostility of the major theatres. For the doing this I had good precedent. The present lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, at the time he rented the Surrey Theatre, melo-dramatized both 'Richard the Third' and 'Macbeth,' as well as many other pieces of the Royal Theatres. 'Richard the Third' was melo-dramatized expressly for the Cobourg Theatre, with additional musical scenes, and an immense reduction of matter, by Mr. Moncrief, who is regularly engaged at the Cobourg Theatre to arrange and adapt all such pieces as may be produced there. I have no wish to persist in availing myself of any *matériel* belonging to the Royal Theatres, nor should I have done so in the present legal instance, had it not been with a view to gratify the public by as complete a display of Mr. Booth's fine talents in *Richard* as the nature of my license permitted. I willingly withdraw it if they consider its performance an injury to them; but when they modestly ask me late on Saturday night, to withdraw a new piece announced for representation on the succeeding Monday, a piece written expressly for my theatre,

and in the production of which I have expended a sum amounting to nearly fifteen hundred pounds, as in the case of "Horatii and Curiatii," the splendid success of which has redoubled their efforts, I should be wanting in every proper feeling of duty to myself, should be guilty of a breach of faith to the public, if I did not manfully resist so unreasonable a demand.

"J. GLOSSOP."

Booth left the Cobourg, and commenced an engagement at the East London Theatre, the spot where the immortal Garrick first made his *début*. Here he went through a regular routine of Shaksperian characters, with the same continued success.

Thence he proceeded to the Amsterdam Theatre, then under the management of Mr. Smithson, where we find the well-known Tom Flynn, of "Temperance" notoriety, Fitzwilliams, Hield, Miss Emery, the celebrated Miss Smithson, and Mr. S. Chapman, the famous melo-dramatic actor, who died in Philadelphia, a few years since.

Among the Dutch, Mr. Booth displayed some of those peculiarities by which he is characterized. The then Prince of Orange (now King) commanded the play of *Macbeth* to be performed, for the express purpose of witnessing Mr. Booth in that character. When the night of performance arrived, however, the tragedian did not appear, nor could his whereabouts be ascertained for several days.

The manager applied to Flynn, to find his friend, they being known at this period as "*the inseparables*," from the fact of their being so much in each other's company, but even *he* was at a loss where to look for him. The general impression was, that he had fallen into the canal, or met with some other accident. Flynn, however, finally discovered his retreat.

While playing billiards one afternoon, he heard, or thought he heard the voice of Booth from an adjoining room. He knocked,



gained admission, and found the tragedian busily engaged in studying Dutch, under the tuition of two interesting *demoiselles*.

Flynn recounted all the disappointments that had been occasioned, and the consequences that had ensued. Booth "regretted his non-appearance;" said he had been busily engaged in endeavoring to obtain a knowledge of the vernacular of the country; that he intended to exculpate himself from the displeasure of his royal highness, and for the interest that he had manifested, thank him in his own language, in which he had perfected himself in a method different from that taught in "*Dutch without a Master*."

He however appeared in *Macbeth*, which he played with admirable skill and judgment.

Seldom as Mr. Booth enacts this character, we have regarded it as one of his happiest efforts. Unlike *Richard*, *Iago*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*, there is a fine current of humanity running through the early part of the character, which is not entirely lost in his unfortunate abandonment of virtue for a career of crime.

The doubt, the perplexity, the irresolution of *Macbeth*, were admirably depicted by Mr. Booth, and his touching lamentations over the loss of "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends," were given with a pathos and truth that found a response in every heart. Equally correct was the display of *Macbeth's* conflicting emotions of lofty ambition and treacherous disloyalty, and the triumph of his art was manifested in the scene following the murder of Duncan. Considering it altogether, it was one of the finest efforts of his genius.

His performance excited the delight and approbation of the people of Amsterdam, and particularly of the Prince, who was so much pleased with it, that he commanded its representation several times. He afterwards appeared as *Hamlet*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Richard the Third*, and *Iago*.

His performance of the latter character was repeated on three

occasions, during his engagement, at the request of the Prince, Mr. S. Chapman, who was stage-manager, playing *Othello*.

His *Iago* has always been considered by critics a master-effort. Booth made him almost a demi-devil, but at the same time continually exhibited the motives that led him to revenge. The subtle poison that he pours into the ears of Othello, until the Moor becomes almost frantic with jealousy ; the dark hints and inuendos of Desdemona's inconstancy ; his change of manner, according to the person with whom he is conversing (for it is one thing with Othello, and another with Roderigo), were all rendered in a style peculiarly his own. His chaste and beautiful reading of the part, and his appropriate and effective gesticulation, were equally admired.

From Amsterdam, he returned to the Cobourg, at which place he repeated his former characters, with his accustomed success. It was here, also, that he married the beautiful Miss Holmes, his present wife.

In the same year, 1820, he was engaged at Drury Lane, and on the fifteenth of August appeared as *Richmond* to Kean's *Richard*, it being among the last performances of the latter actor, previous to his departure for America. Mr. Booth afterwards appeared as *Iago* to Kean's *Othello*, and *Edgar* to Kean's *Lear*, with great success.

In November, Booth played a variety of characters on the same boards, and among others, *King Lear* to Mr. Cooper's *Edgar*, and *Michael Ducas* to Cooper's *Lothaire*, in "*Adelgitha*."

He next visited the Island of Madeira, where he remained several weeks. It was at this period that he contemplated a voyage to the United States, little supposing that he would afterwards make his residence in the New World.

At this place, he became very much attached to a horse, which he afterwards purchased, and for which he manifested an almost parental anxiety.

As his favorite "Peacock" may be forgotten amidst the varied incidents and adventures that we shall chronicle, we will here remark, that after remaining in the service of his master, until he had attained the age of thirty, death closed his career, to the unfeigned sorrow of his owner.

Having finally resolved to visit America, he took passage for "Peacock," himself and wife, and they arrived and were safely landed at Norfolk, in Virginia.

## CHAPTER VII.

Booth's introduction to Gilfert—First appearance in America—His success in Richard—Opinions of the critics—Excitement among the play-goers—Engagement at the Park Theatre—Opinions of the New York press—First benefit at the Park—Kemble's, Macready's and Charles Kean's Hamlet—Booth's performance of the character—Booth in comedy—His Jerry Sneak—Incidents at his benefit—His address to the audience—Visit to various places—Departure for England.

WHEN Booth first arrived in this country, he found a company playing at Richmond, under the management of the eccentric Charles Gilfert, once manager of the Bowery Theatre in New York, on whom he called, *introducing himself*.

An engagement was immediately effected, and he opened on the 13th of July, 1821, in his favorite character of *Richard the Third*, to a house crammed from pit to gallery.

During the first three acts of the play, so tame was his performance, that Gilfert was in doubt whether he had not been the victim of an impostor, who had assumed the name of Booth. This, however, was the effect of illness, produced by his sea voyage, for in the fourth and fifth acts, "Richard" was "himself again," and never did this gifted genius represent the "crook'd back tyrant" with more satisfaction to an audience. The eccentric manager was in ecstasies, the audience electrified, and the Richmondites enthusiastic in his praise.

The critics lauded his performance without measure. "His



manner of *looking* the character," says a writer of that day, "very early caught and fixed attention, and was eloquently expressive. My little daughter, who sat beside me, whispered, 'Papa, could *you see* the two spiders he was *looking at* on the floor?' 'No, my dear, but I thought I felt them crawl, when he put his hand to his bosom to tear them off.' "

Those who have seen Booth's Richard will recollect the scene referred to, in which he is alluding to the two princes, in his interview with Buckingham:—

"I tell thee, coz, I've lately had two spiders  
Crawling upon my startled hopes—  
Now, though thy friendly hand has brush'd 'em from me,  
Yet, still they crawl offensive to my eyes—  
I would have some kind friend to tread upon 'em :  
I would be king, my cousin."

Another critic, in the Richmond Enquirer, says, "Gentlemen who have seen Cooke in this part do not hesitate to pronounce Booth superior to *him*, and others who have lately seen Kean in the same character, aver that in some of the scenes he is equal, and in others, the most trying of the play, superior to that celebrated actor. His manner is chaste and natural, what it should be in the situation in which he is supposed to be placed."

The excitement which Booth had produced in England, of course extended to America. This, added to that created in Richmond by his performance, engendered an anxious desire to see him, throughout the country. Letters from managers flowed in from all quarters, and his star was still in the ascendant.

For weeks he played nightly in Richmond, to crowded and admiring audiences, and he was and is to this day, a magnet of attraction in that city.

After this very successful engagement he arrived in the city of New York on the 2d of October, and in twenty-four hours after,

the manager of the Park Theatre had effected an arrangement, and announced him to play *Richard* on the 5th.

The papers of that day are warmly eulogistic of his performances, and though Kean, Cooper, and a host of others had just been delighting the audiences in the same characters, he drew crowded houses and warm expressions of admiration.

Among numerous allusions to his *début* by the daily press, we extract the following :—

“ The notoriety of Mr. Booth in London, and from the various reports of our friends who had seen him there, had greatly excited public curiosity. In consequence, a full and fashionable house assembled at an early hour on Friday evening, to witness his *début*.

“ The first scene of the play, though respectably supported, was uninteresting from the anxiety all felt for the appearance of the young candidate for histrionic fame. At length he appeared, and was welcomed with three long, distinct rounds of applause, which must have been very gratifying to the young actor, and who, we could perceive, was sensibly affected.

“ In the earlier scenes Mr. B. was evidently embarrassed ; in the course of the second act he began to recover, and in the third he evidently gained upon the good opinion of the audience ; in the fourth he produced a great impression in his favor, but in the fifth act, while he astonished, he confirmed the high opinion many had expressed of his talents as an actor.

“ We are well aware it is not very difficult to produce effect in most of Shakspeare’s plays, because the characters are relieved with such prominence and vigor, that the hand cannot be laid upon them without bearing away some kind of impression ; but to transmit them into full and accurate beauty to the eye, to transmit the image from the volume in its splendor to the stage ; to summon up before us in actual, tangible existence the concep-

tions which have crowned our silent study, with richness and beauty, with the fondness of love—the fierceness of headlong ambition, and the fluctuations of sublime spirits distracted by jealousy, superstition and revenge, require a faculty no teaching, no diligence can give. *It must be born with the actor.*

“Mr. Booth is a very young man, we had almost said a lad; when we reflect upon his youth and the effect produced by his acting, we cannot withhold from him our highest praise.

“The first scene in which he evidently made a favorable impression, was the wooing scene with Lady Anne. In this, Mr. Kean had justly obtained great applause. Mr. B. played it as well as we ever saw it done, and *the mode* differed from any actor we have seen. In the course of the third act, Mr. B. unfortunately became *hoarse*, but in the *tent scene*, he showed much originality: rising from the sofa, he dashed to the bottom of the stage, and with an attitude and expression of countenance we cannot describe, and will not forget, but which was neither that of Cooke, Cooper, Kean, or Wallack. He made an extraordinary and most sensible impression on the audience. There was at first a pause, which suddenly burst forth in a long and rapturous applause, intermixed with loud expressions of approbation. In the contest with Richmond, and the dying scene, he was loudly applauded, and fell amidst the cries of ‘bravo, bravo,’ from all parts of the house. In this last scene, no actor could have imparted more gratification which depended wholly on attitude, action, and ‘*l’expression de visage* ;’ in short, stage effect.

“Upon the whole, we consider Mr. B. an astonishing young man, that he has fine talents for the stage, which, under the directions of his judgment (of which we have formed a very favorable opinion), and with the aid of close study and practice, will in a few years elevate him to the highest point of histrionic fame, and render him the successful rival of (if not) the first actor of the age.”

After playing *Richard*, *Octavian*, *Brutus*, *Lear*, and *Othello* his first benefit in New York was fixed for the 15th of October, when he appeared as *Hamlet*, and *Jerry Sneak* in Foote's farce of the "Mayor of Garratt."

His representation of the former character we have always regarded as one of his best efforts.

After witnessing Charles Kemble, Macready, C. Kean, and many others in the part, we frankly assert that we reaped more entire satisfaction from Booth's representation.

In making this remark, we disclaim any desire to detract from the high merit that belongs to the other actors we have named.

The weariness of three hours that we spent in listening to Kemble as *Hamlet*, until our bones ached, compared with the intense interest that Booth inspired, is too vivid to be easily forgotten. Mr. Kemble, however, was not without merit, and though the *drawl* of his voice was anything but pleasing, there was a degree of artistical finish about the performance, worthy of great praise.

Mr. Macready was never a favorite of ours, and is, in our opinion, indebted more to circumstances and to a cultivated talent for his reputation and success, than to any inherent genius. His acting, though evincing the scholar and the artist, was too cold and mechanical for our taste. No one who witnessed him could for a moment divest himself of the knowledge that it was Mr. Macready who was on the stage, instead of the imaginary creation of the poet. No matter who or what the character might be, still the *actor* was visible and the *art* apparent. His *Hamlet* was a soulless, automaton-like performance. His voice, like Kemble's, was excessively disagreeable—a deep, husky, guttural sound, of which he never could rid himself, and which, at times, rendered his reading almost ludicrous.

Charles Kean's *Hamlet* has many beauties, but he is physically disqualified to do justice to any character in tragedy. His con-



ception is slow, and though generally correct, his execution will not second it. Nature has given him a most unmelodious voice, the sound of which appears to flow rather through his nose than its appropriate organ ; a face altogether unsuited to the characters he attempts, and we doubt if she ever intended him for an actor : but Booth, with his distinct and melodious utterance, his expressive countenance, and his perfect and original execution, made an admirable representative of the Prince of Denmark.

It would be impossible, without entering into a critical analysis of his performance, which would occupy more space than we desire to appropriate, to give the reader an adequate idea of his success in personating the philosophic Dane. From the first to the last scene, it was but a succession of brilliant and startling effects. It was a complete study in itself. Indeed, we never saw any actor that embodied the character with such a perfect conception of the author's meaning. Passages of obscure and doubtful import, as generally delivered, became clear to the dullest comprehension.

Instead of deducing the character of Hamlet from the text, his mind seemed to grasp at once every thought and act of the melancholy prince, in one entire and perfect unity, and the words, as they fell from his lips, appeared rather the spontaneous echoes of his own heart, than the studied phrases of the author.

How beautiful was the scene with Ophelia, in the third act ! The strange and startling burst of passion at the sight of the King (the introduction of whom, for a moment, was entirely new to us), was softened by his tender feeling for Ophelia, and the quick and passionate pressure of her hand to his lips, as he leaves her, betraying his predominant love in spite of his harshness, was a master-stroke of excellence.

One of the great points which seems to have puzzled not only the representatives of Hamlet, but the commentators of Shak-

sphere, is his madness, about which there is a great diversity of opinion.

The idea that we have always entertained on this subject is, that Hamlet's weakness and melancholy, his ruminating disposition, his thoughts of suicide and his interviews with his father's spirit, his resolution to revenge his parent's murder, which, through his infirmity of purpose (the usual characteristic of deeply contemplative natures), he procrastinates, produces a frame of mind which, though not madness, borders on insanity. This, in addition to his predetermination to assume madness, as a mask to hide his real feelings and purposes, for he speaks of putting "an antic disposition on," will account for what otherwise would be his strange and unnatural conduct towards Ophelia.

Such we understood to be Mr. Booth's idea of Hamlet's madness; at any rate, it was the conclusion that we formed, after witnessing his performance. His interviews with his mother were intensely striking, particularly the one wherein the ghost stalks through the apartment. The sudden look of amazement and the thousand thoughts that seemed rushing through his mind at the sight of his "father's spirit in arms," were admirably depicted. The lines beginning:—

"Why, look you there!—look, how it steals away,"

were given with thrilling effect. His ruminations upon human life and his uncertain destiny, his interview with the ghost, the scene with the players, and his colloquies at the grave of Ophelia, were the perfection of the art.

The appearance of Mr. Booth in the lowest walks of comedy, presented a curious contrast to Mr. Booth in tragedy, apparently having changed his nature with his dress, and displaying the versatility of his talent in assuming and maintaining that perfect conception of the character, for which he was so distinguished.

One of the critics of the day has said: "In the 'Mayor of Garratt,' the acting of Mr. Booth was exquisite. We feel an emotion of sympathy for those who did not see this exhibition of comic talent; the meekness, folly, good nature and hen-pecked air were assuredly done to the life."

In Jerry, you see the very soul of nature in a fellow that is "pigeon livered and lacks gall" laid open and anatomized. You can see that his heart is no bigger than one of his pin heads, and his head as soft as a pipkin. His whole aspect is chilled and frightened, as if he had been dipped into a pond, and yet he looks as if he wished he could be snug and comfortable, if he dared.

He smiles, as if he would be friends with you on any terms, and the tears come in his eyes because you will not let him. The tones of his voice are prophetic; his words are made of water gruel. The scene in which he strives to make a confidant of the Major is great, and his song of the little old woman "as melancholy as her disaster itself."

The first benefit of Booth in New York was a liberal one, the house being literally crammed, and the beneficiary clearing twelve hundred dollars. The Evening Post, of the ensuing day, said:—

"This gentleman took leave of the New York audience on Monday evening last. As we anticipated, his *benefit* was a '*bumper*.' Few actors have been better received. He fully maintained the reputation of an actor, and exceeded the expectations of his friends, leaving the most favorable impression of his histrionic abilities. At the close of the afterpiece, there was a unanimous cry for Mr. Booth, scarcely an individual leaving either pit or boxes, but waited for his change of dress, he then appeared amidst the shouts and huzzas of a delighted audience.

"The young stranger was so evidently embarrassed at the unexpected compliment, that he was almost unable to speak, and

addressed the audience in a voice so low, that we were unable to hear all he said. We understood him, however, to say, that 'he was overwhelmed with gratitude, he knew not how to express the feelings which their kindness and liberality had inspired, he was unaccustomed on such occasions to address an audience, he did not expect the honor would have been extended to him ; he never should, he never *could* forget it.'

"His agitation evidently increasing, he bowed to the audience, and retired amidst thundering applause, leaving behind him impressions not a little improved by the modesty of his deportment."

From New York he went to Boston and thence to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and in fact the principal cities throughout the Union, everywhere winning "golden opinions from all sorts of people."

During his travels he purchased a farm, at Bel-Air in Maryland, where he left his "Peacock" in careful hands, and in 1825 sailed for England.



## CHAPTER VIII.

Booth in England—Visit to Bristol—Return to America—Engagement at the Park Theatre—Retirement to his Farm—Visit of Henry Wallack—Booth's Managerial Efforts at the Chatham Theatre—The Production of "Sylla"—Booth's Management at New Orleans—His Performance of *Oresté* at the French Theatre—Visit to General Jackson—His Employment at the Hermitage—Adventure with Mr. Simmons—Opinion of that Gentleman relative to Booth's Readings—Mrs. Booth at Home—Offer of an Engagement from Dana—That Gentleman's Management—Booth's Return to Baltimore—Flynn's Theatre in Annapolis—Theatricals in the Olden Time—First Performance in America—Flynn's Success in Annapolis—Booth's Non-Appearance—New Route to Annapolis—Queer Adventure of the Tragedian's—His Performance—Effort to play on Sunday, and the Result.

IMMEDIATELY after his arrival in England, Mr. Booth appeared at Drury Lane, whence, after playing a short season with great success, he proceeded to the East London Theatre, to perform an engagement, but, on his opening night, the house was burnt to the ground, and he lost the greater portion of his wardrobe.

He next went to Bristol, where he enacted the principal characters at the theatre under the management of the father of Mr. C. Macready, where he met his quondam friend Flynn, who was then stage manager, and who played the second parts with him, Flynn at that time being a worshipper of Thalia, whom he afterwards forsook for Melpomene.

Flynn, at this period, was very anxious to embark for America with Booth, but Macready refused to annul his engagement.

Booth soon after visited London, and thence returned to America, in 1824, and made his appearance at the Park Theatre on the twenty-fourth of March in *Richard the Third*. He then appeared successively as *Sir Giles Overreach*, in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts ;" *Sir Edward Mortimer*, in the "Iron Chest ;" *Posthumus*, in "Cymbeline ;" *Reuben Glenroy*, in "Town and Country ;" and, on the occasion of his benefit, as *Selim*, in the "Bride of Abydos," and *Jerry Sneak*, in the "Mayor of Garratt."

After this engagement, he retired to his farm at Bel-Air, where he found his "Peacock" in excellent condition, and apparently delighted to see his old master, with whom he had enjoyed the benefit of the sea air on their voyage from Madeira.

In the month of June, he played a few nights at the Park, and on the evening of his benefit appeared as *Pescara*, in the "Apostate ;" which, in the opinion of his friends, is the proudest effort of his genius. *Hemeya* was represented by Mr. Conway, who had arrived a few months previous from England, and was commanding a large share of attention.

He returned again to Bel-Air, where he was visited by his old friend, Mr. Henry Wallack, who came as an applicant for Booth to accompany him to New York, and accept the management of the old Chatham Theatre (since torn down), which had been leased by Wallack and Freeman.

Booth accepted the offer, which resulted in giving the establishment a position in the estimation of the public that it had never before attained. How he managed, how pieces were produced, with what regularity the stage movements were conducted, are well remembered by those who were in the habit of attending the playhouse.

During the period of his official services it was one of the best regulated theatres in the country, and such was the strictness of the rules (rules which were enforced, too), that actors con-

nected with the establishment who came ten minutes later than the appointed time, were either fined or discharged.

The greatest regard was paid to the appropriateness and style of the scenery and costumes, and even the plays themselves were subjected to a critical examination; objectionable passages were either altered or stricken out, and the entire internal machinery of the theatre harmoniously conducted.

During Booth's stage-management the tragedy of "Sylla," translated from the French of E. Jouy, for the occasion, was produced in magnificent style, Booth playing the principal character. It proved very successful, and was repeated a number of nights to large audiences.

After remaining with Wallack for a period of three months, he left for New Orleans, and became stage-manager the ensuing winter at the Camp Street Theatre, under the management of Mr. Caldwell, where the same care and attention in the production of pieces were observed that characterized his management at the Chatham.

His individual attraction was most extraordinary, playing during that season *Richard the Third* about sixteen nights, to houses crowded to suffocation.

Circumstances, of which we are ignorant, induced Caldwell and Booth to separate.

Mr. Booth then called on Mr. Davis, the manager of the *Théâtre d'Orléans*, and inquired what he would give for his services one night, to appear as *Oresté*, in Racine's tragedy of "*Andromaque*."

We should here premise that Mr. Booth is a perfect master of the French language, and, as far as regards purity of pronunciation and accentuation alone, might easily be mistaken for a Frenchman. It may not be uninteresting to add, that he is also entirely conversant with the Italian, which he speaks with equal

fluency, is familiar with the German, and has a considerable knowledge of the Hebrew, *to say nothing of the Dutch.*

Mr. Davis, astonished at first at the suggestion, inquired if he considered himself capable of doing it to his own satisfaction, to which Booth replied, that unless he did he should not have made the proposal. Mr. Davis then offered him three hundred dollars for each night's performance, during a period of twelve nights, which Booth declined, his engagements not allowing him to remain more than a single night.

An arrangement to play *one night* only was concluded, and he appeared as *Oresté*, which he performed to the astonishment and delight of all beholders, and so closely did he imitate the style of the French tragedians, even to the peculiarity of their exits and their manner of stage business, that many who had witnessed the great Talma were struck with the fact, that all the excellencies of the great French actor had been copied and adopted by Booth.

At the close of the performance he was loudly called for, and appeared amidst a shower of bouquets and reiterated rounds of applause, mingled with cries of "Talma!" and "bravo!" and every demonstration of delight and approbation from an enthusiastic audience.

He left New Orleans, and played successfully at Natchez, St. Louis, and Nashville.

At the latter place he was invited to the "Hermitage," by the late ex-President Jackson, where he remained a week, the General and his lady being among the warmest admirers of his histrionic talents.

Here he amused the hero of New Orleans in recounting his "hair-breadth 'scapes—his moving accidents, by flood and field," and in reading portions of the scriptures and "Paradise Lost," which, in the clear and distinct enunciation of Booth, were rendered surpassingly beautiful. Whatever he read came with



all the point and effect of which the matter was susceptible, every thought seemingly concentrated on the subject.

While we are on the subject, we will leave the military veteran and the tragedian, to record an incident related to the writer by the late Mr. Simmons, whose lectures on elocution and dramatic poetry are well remembered by the public.

After witnessing one of Booth's splendid efforts at Boston, Mr. Simmons introduced himself to Booth, acknowledged the pleasure he had derived from listening to his beautiful readings, and requested that they might read together some passages of their favorite author, he too being a worshipper at the shrine of Shakspeare.

Booth readily consented, and invited Mr. Simmons to accompany him to his lodgings.

Late as it was, they started in company, and after threading numerous narrow streets and obscure lanes, they finally reached a small tenement in —— street, where Booth knocked at the door, and with his companion, was led by the servant up several flights of stairs to a room, the furniture of which consisted of a bed, two chairs, and a pine table. A light having been procured, the tragedian took from a shelf two volumes, which proved to be the Bible and a copy of Shakspeare.

"Now," said Booth, "I will read from either."

"Well ; from the scriptures, then," said Simmons, "for I would like to hear the sacred volume read by one so capable of giving force and effect to the sublimity of its language."

Booth selected a chapter, "and never," said Mr. Simmons, "was I before so struck with the eloquence, beauty, and power of the passages read by the great actor, as when seated at that pine table ;—his fine features glowing with the fire of genius, he poured out his rich melodious tones, apparently completely absorbed by his subject. Late as it was, I could have sat the night through,

listening to eloquence till then unheard, and of which before I had no conception."

Such praise as this, from a mind like that of the late eloquent and classical Simmons, whose fine talents were generally acknowledged, and whose untimely death was most sincerely deplored, is worth a thousand of the stereotyped puffs which encumber a portion of the daily press: It was a just tribute to genius, from a mind of superior excellence.

From Nashville, Booth proceeded to Cincinnati, and thence to Bel-Air, where he was seized with a serious illness, resulting from fatigue and over-exertion, in which he was attended by Mrs. Booth, who administered to his wants with all that interest and deep-devotedness which a fond wife only can show. It is but an act of justice to here render one feeble tribute of praise to a deserving woman, who, in the quiet of her home, is equally honored for her virtues and the kindness of her heart ; and Booth, whose erratic course is proverbial, was never known to act otherwise than as the kindest of fathers, and the most affectionate of husbands.

In the fall of 1831, Booth had an offer from Mr. Dana, of the Tremont Theatre, Boston, to accept an engagement in that city, Mr. Dana having leased the establishment. This gentleman had formerly been engaged in business as an exchange broker, and probably knew more about the value of uncurrent money than the intricate management of a theatre. He was rash enough to embark in a hazardous employment, of which he was entirely ignorant.

He made arrangements with various theatrical "stars" to perform the same characters on the same evenings, and so loosely did he manage his affairs, that Hamblin and Booth were engaged to perform a number of nights at the same time, each arriving and claiming the house, according to agreement.

Of course the manager selected the attractive star to perform,

and Mr. Hamblin would sit in one of the boxes, witnessing Booth's performance, receiving a hundred dollars per night, without acting, which this once popular tragedian, curiously enough, is fond of relating as a capital joke.

After Booth left Boston he went to join his family in Baltimore, where he met his old friend Flynn, for the first time in America. Flynn, at this period, was engaged in erecting a theatre in Annapolis (the present capital of Maryland), a place rendered interesting from the fact of its being the spot where the first regular theatre was built in America, in 1752.

It may not be out of the way to give a copy of the first bill of announcement, the contrast between it and that of the advertisements now issued, being sufficiently curious to make it worthy of record :

" By permission of his Honour the President. At the new theatre in Annapolis, by the company of comedians, on Monday next, being the 13th of this instant, July, 1752, will be performed a comedy called *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Likewise, a farce called the *Virgin Unmasked*. To begin precisely at 7 o'clock. Tickets to be had at the printing office. Box 10 shillings, pit 7 and 6 pence, gallery 5 shillings. No person to be admitted behind the scenes."

We believe, however, that it was at Williamsburgh, which was then the capital, that the first play was enacted in the Western World, it being in a storehouse which had been converted into a temple of the muses, by Hallam, in 1751. It is also worthy of record, that the first performance consisted of Shakspeare's "*Merchant of Venice*," and Garrick's farce of "*Lethe*;" thus the "Swan of Avon," and his worshipper, led the way for the drama in the New World.

While Booth and Flynn were in Baltimore, the latter proposed to his friend, to play on the Monday week following, offering him a clear one-third of each night's receipts. Booth accepted the engagement, and Flynn opened the Annapolis Theatre, for a sea-



son of seven weeks, during which time the following persons appeared : Cooper, Wood, " Old Jefferson," Cowell, wife and son, Clara Fisher, Mrs. Barnes, Geo. Holland, Flynn and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Blake, Mr. Somerville, and various others. During the seven weeks the unprecedented sum of *nine thousand dollars* was received in this small place.

Booth did not appear according to announcement, nor did he arrive in Annapolis until a week afterwards. Instead of traveling by land, as any one else would have done, he took passage in a wood-sloop. Flynn, in the meantime, had written to Baltimore, and all the information that he could gain from Mrs. Booth relative to the tragedian, was, that he had started for Annapolis some days previous.

Passing down the principal street, Flynn was accosted by a dirty urchin, who inquired if he " was the manager of the theatre ?"

" Yes," said Flynn, " why do you ask ?"

" Because," answered the boy, " we've got one of your playing chaps on board our sloop, raising the devil with the captain, who wishes you to come and take him away."

" Well," said Flynn, " show me the vessel," and away trudged the manager, with the boy at his heels, to the sloop, where, to his astonishment, he found the captain on his knees, with a large bowl in his hand, and Booth standing opposite with a musket levelled at him, the tragedian exclaiming in his tragical tones, " Drink, Sir ! Drink ! you're bilious and require physic ; I know it by you're eyes ; I know it by you're skin. Drink, Sir, or I'll send you to another and a better world !"

" Pray let me off," said the captain. " Think of my wife and children ! I've drank six bowls full already, which has nearly killed me, and this I know will physic me to death."

Booth had accidentally seen the captain's medicine chest, and was administering salts to his frightened patient.



Flynn took the musket from Booth, explained to the captain the tragedian's occasional aberrations of mind, apologized, made him a present, shook hands, and returned to his lodgings with his whimsical friend.

During this engagement, Booth never played with more satisfaction to an audience, or credit to himself. The theatre was attended by the most reputable people in the place, and was nightly crowded.

Before he left Annapolis, he contracted an acquaintance with the Town Clerk, an individual by the name of W——s.

This gentleman happened to have a propensity for indulging in a social glass, and Booth managed to get him partly intoxicated. He then, after paying him the tax of five dollars for a theatrical representation, coaxed, until he succeeded in obtaining from him a license to play on *Sunday* night.

He immediately wended his way to Flynn. "Here," said Booth, "is a license to play next Sunday night. Have *you* any objection?"

"Certainly not," replied Flynn.

"Give me your consent then in writing," said the tragedian.

"You shall have it," responded the manager, for no one was more ready for a joke.

The manager assembled the actors, got their consent, and the play of "Hamlet" was cast and bills issued, to the astonishment of the sober-minded people of Annapolis, and the threats of those in authority.

The theatre was lighted, and poor W—— came to Booth, and, in the most piteous manner, told him of the dilemma into which he had been seduced in an unguarded moment,—that it had already injured him considerably, and the result would be his disgrace and loss of situation. He returned Booth the five dollars, who was finally prevailed upon to forego this extraordinary whim.

## CHAPTER IX.

Booth in Philadelphia—Engagement at the Chestnut Street Theatre—Visit to the Circus—Public Performance in the Street—Return to Bel-Air—Booth's Generosity—Engagement at the Park Theatre—Booth and Forrest—"Mud Theatre" of Baltimore—Booth's Association with Flynn in its Alteration and Management—Their Managerial Arrangements at the Holliday Street Theatre—The Company Engaged—Booth's Appearance in a variety of Characters—His Performance of Luke in "Riches"—Booth's Acting considered—His "Richard" reviewed—*Début* of Charles Kean in Baltimore—Extraordinary Distribution of Characters—Booth in a subordinate Part—Close of the Season—Booth's Habits of Study—Difficulties attending the Profession—Kemble's Remark on Hamlet—Requisites for an actor, with Accompanying Reflections.

FROM Annapolis, Booth went to Philadelphia, and opened at the Chestnut Street Theatre, under the management of Messrs. Pratt and Weymms, and here, the Annapolis whim seems to have followed him, for he still insisted that there was no immorality in performing a play on the Sabbath.

He dressed himself for "Hamlet" one Sunday morning, and during the day went to Fog and Stickney's Circus, and mounted one of the most vicious horses in the stable,—one in fact, that no one but the owner could approach with safety.

The noble animal, however, as if conscious of some extraordinary performance, allowed Booth to approach, conduct him out of the stable, mount without saddle or bridle, and ride him through the streets, to the wonder and astonishment of the quiet citizens of Penn, who were wending their way from church.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the tragedian to the passers by, "I intend to perform Hamlet to night, for the benefit of the poor, and a good play is worth forty sermons, both for morals and reformation," and then changing his voice to a musical strain, he sang :—

" Oh, 'tis my delight  
Of a shiny night  
In the season of the year,"

to which he added the significant remark, "Join chorus, Christians."

His friends had considerable difficulty to overcome this strange caprice. He was taken to his farm, at Bel-Air, and by the care of his family, he soon regained his health and reason.

It was during this visit of Booth's to Philadelphia, that his native liberality and generosity were manifested towards Mrs. Gilfert, on being made acquainted with the death of her husband. Recollecting his politeness, on the occasion of his own *début* in Richmond, he enclosed two hundred dollars in an envelope, and sent it to her anonymously, one person only witnessing the act, by whom it was communicated to the writer.

He continued in Maryland during the summer, taking his usual rides to Baltimore, on his well known "Peacock."

In the month of September, 1831, he received an offer from Mr. Simpson of the Park Theatre, New York, to play two nights in conjunction with Mr. Forrest, which he accepted.

"Venice Preserved" was produced on the first occasion, Booth enacting *Pierre*, and Forrest *Jaffier*.

The second night, "Othello" was performed, Forrest playing *Othello*, and Booth, *Iago*. On both occasions the house was crowded to overflowing, and for some reason, which can only be guessed at, Forrest has, we believe, never attempted *Jaffier* since.

Other arrangements prevented the two tragedians from extending their engagements.

As this is the only place in which we shall have occasion to allude to Mr. Forrest, we have a few observations to offer upon the "American Tragedian." It is not our intention, however, to give any facts in his life, not that they would be devoid of interest to the public, but that they are generally familiar to the world.

We confess partiality towards Mr. Forrest, both as an actor and as a man, and as he is the only American that has ever risen to eminence as a tragedian, we are proud of the estimation in which he is held by his countrymen, and of the attention he has received in the Old World.

With little or no education in his boyhood, he has surmounted difficulties which nothing but the most devoted perseverance and intense application could overcome, until he has reached a very desirable position in the histrionic art.

Mr. Forrest has had two classes of individuals to contend against. The first, his friends, who have lavished the most extravagant panegyrics upon his acting, and the last, his enemies, who have bestowed the most indiscriminate censure. We have no sympathy with either.

We never regarded Mr. Forrest as a Shaksperian actor, and his performances of *Hamlet* and *Richard* are a proof of the truth of our opinion ; but in characters like *Virginius*, *Damon*, *Richelieu* and *Spartacus*, which depend mainly upon the display of intense and highly-wrought passion, and requiring great physical strength, he certainly has no superior on the stage. In quiet and subdued passages he is not so successful, although there can be found many who will disagree with us in this opinion.

Mr. Forrest has one great merit. If he sometimes tears "a passion to tatters," he never allows it to "come tardy off," and the spectator is interested, however much he may find to censure,



As John Philip Kemble said of Edmund Kean, he is "terribly in earnest."

In Roman characters, his lofty and dignified bearing cannot but challenge admiration, and in his delineation of the noble virtues of *Damon* and *Brutus*, his contempt for tyranny and oppression seems but the echo of his own individual feelings. The friends of Forrest have already blended with his name many of the virtues of his Roman characters, and we are inclined to the opinion that he is not undeserving of them.

Though his early career was marked by indigence and unintellectual association, he has in his maturer years nobly improved the opportunities which more favorable circumstances have permitted him to embrace, and his career both on and off the stage is an example worthy of imitation.

In private life he is alike honored for his kindness of heart and amiable deportment. No man has more friends, or is more deserving of them than Edwin Forrest.

Some weeks previous to the engagement of Forest and Booth at the Park, the latter had taken a lease of the "Mud Theatre," of Baltimore, and was altering and enlarging it to a beautiful and convenient place of amusement, which he called the "Adelphi."

After having expended four thousand dollars in fitting it up, he associated Flynn with him as partner. That gentleman having become the *acting* manager, he engaged a company, to open on the sixteenth of September.

The Adelphi not being entirely completed at the anticipated time, the managers hired the Holliday Street Theatre, at seventy-five dollars per week, until their own establishment was ready, and opened it with the comedy of "Town and Country," Booth playing *Reuben Glenroy*, and Mrs. Booth, *Rosalie Somers*, being her first appearance on any stage. The farce of "My Aunt" followed, Flynn playing *Dick Dashall*, and John Sefton, *Rattle*.

The company consisted of Booth, Cooper, John Duff, Warren, Flynn, John Sefton, Thomas Archer, D. McKinney, Mercer and family, W. Isherwood, the popular Roberts, and the lamented Finn ; also, Mrs. Duff, Mrs. Flynn, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Smith, Miss Geer, and others.

The season was very prosperous, Booth playing continually. He enacted, during this period, a greater variety of parts than he ever played in the country on any previous occasion. In addition to his usual list of characters, he appeared as *Roderick Dhu*, *Richard the Second*, *Selim*, in the "Bride of Abydos," *Faulkland*, in the "Rivals," *Penruddock*, in the "Wheel of Fortune," and *Luke*, in "Riches."

The novelty of these pieces, which are seldom performed in this country, drew crowded houses nightly. His representation of the latter character, Luke, in the play of "Riches," altered from Massinger's "City Madam," was one of his most striking efforts. It was an original and beautiful performance. His assumption of the lowly penitent, after a course of extravagance and folly, his seeming humility to gain once more his tyrannic sway, his quick return to his real character and brutal, nay, almost fiend-like cruelty towards his dependent relatives, after gaining his power, were among the most life-like scenes ever portrayed by this master of the passions.

Who that has witnessed his representation, can ever forget his hypocritical plea for mercy when discovered in his treachery, and his sudden, tiger-like spring, after finding it disregarded, and the bold transition from the fawning suppliant to the daring ruffian, defying, even in defeat, his injured brother ?

His representation of this character alone would stamp him superior to any actor on the stage.

His *Reuben Glenroy* was also much admired for its chaste and beautiful performance. It was, however, in the portrayal of the dark and gloomier passions of our nature, in the representation of

bold and romantic villainy, inexplicable hatred, or insatiable revenge, that he was most remarkable. The inward workings of the mind developed themselves on his countenance; the eye dilated, the bosom heaved, the veins of the temple swelled almost to bursting, the face now reddened to the deepest hue, and anon paled to the ashy whiteness of marble, and finally, when death was about closing the career of the mimic hero, and the voice seemed hushed by its near approach, the countenance yet evinced what the tongue refused to utter.

As *Pescara*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Iago*, he was without an equal; and his *Richard the Third*, after Kean's death, became and remains entirely his own. No other actor seems to have had the power of depicting the deep, wily, and ambitious character of the tyrant. Booth had all the requisites of mind and person.

His fine eye and musical voice, his physical power, which sustained him through five acts, during which Richard is almost constantly before the audience, and his manner of conceiving and executing the character, rendered him in this part, "himself alone."

In the first three acts, his profound dissimulation and cunning, through which his ardent aspirations for the crown betrayed themselves, his hypocritical interview with the "Mayor and citizens," and the exhibition of his real character immediately after, the scene with Tyrrell, the murderer of the princes, and his soliloquies throughout, were beyond all praise.

In the closing acts, he boldly shadowed forth the spirit of a Plantagenet. Richard, though a tyrant and a villain, was still the descendant of a long and princely line of ancestors. How vividly did Booth portray the determined spirit of the soldier, and in the last scene with what savage fury did he attack Richmond! Indeed, it was one of his chief characteristics to abandon himself

entirely to the part that he assumed, and you forgot the actor and the man, in the character personified.

During the season, Mr. Charles Kean made his first appearance at Baltimore, as *Richard the Third*, but during the whole of his engagement he seldom drew a sufficient number of persons to defray the expenses, and the public, of course, would draw comparisons between Booth and Kean, and the latter, relying more upon the borrowed lustre of his father's name, than any merit of his own, met with but little success.

The tragedy of "Hamlet" was "got up," with the following powerful cast, in order to give him every opportunity to make an impression :—

HAMLET,	.	.	.	.	MR. C. KEAN.
Ghost,	.	.	.	.	" Duff.
Polonius,	.	.	.	.	" Warren.
Laertes,	.	.	.	.	" Acher.
Horatio,	.	.	.	.	" Hazard.
King,	.	.	.	.	" Isherwood.
Osric,	.	.	.	.	" J. Sefton.
First Grave Digger,	.	.	.	.	" Flynn.
Second do. do.	.	.	.	.	" Mercer.
First Actor,	.	.	.	.	" McKinney.
SECOND DO.	.	.	.	.	" BOOTH.
Ophelia,	.	.	.	.	Mrs. Flynn.
Queen,	.	.	.	.	" Duff.

Booth, in selecting the most subordinate character in the piece, brought into operation the entire strength of the company. His whole performance consisted in the recitation of the following lines :—

"Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing ;  
Confederate season, else no creature seeing ;



Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,  
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted—thrice infected,  
Thy natural magic, and dire property,  
On wholesome life usurp immediately,"

which he delivered with great beauty and effect, commanding round upon round of applause, thus proving how much more depends upon the ability of the actor, than upon the importance of the part. The true diamond will glisten, however bad may be the setting. Strange as it may appear, he won more approbation and applause for his brief performance, than the *Hamlet* of the evening.

The house closed after a prosperous season of *sixteen weeks*, yielding sufficient to pay for the alterations of the Adelphi, the expenses to all concerned, and a profit of *twenty-six hundred dollars*.

Whenever Booth occupied official situations in the theatre, his industry was untiring. When not otherwise engaged, it was his custom to saunter among the fields, pursuing his studies, and by the way, it is the want of this system of application which proves the rock upon which the majority of our actors are shipwrecked.

How many years would it require to completely understand such a character as Lear or Hamlet? What study must it cost, and what time is requisite, to obtain a thorough knowledge of the part! How many works have been written in the endeavor to analyze the single character of Macbeth, and what depth and intricacy of thought must be imbued in the creations of the immortal bard, to have puzzled the acumen of such commentators as Johnson, Stevens, and Malone!

The great John Philip Kemble, whose fame rests on his representation of Shakspeare's heroes, asserted, that after having devoted thirty years to the study of Hamlet, he was yet incompe-

tent to do it justice, although he almost made the character his own by the masterly manner in which he played it.

Yet, in the face of all these facts, it is no uncommon occurrence, for a theatrical aspirant to attempt Hamlet or Othello, on the night of his *début*, with just knowledge enough of the character to recollect the language. Indeed, the majority of stage-struck heroes select "Richard the Third" for their opening night, and, as a matter of course, are subjected to the mortification of a failure.

The actor's art is, perhaps, the most difficult of all professions. It requires years of practice to acquire a knowledge of the business of the stage, and to wear off the indescribable dread, which invariably attends the novice.

It is also requisite that nature should be bounteous in her gifts. A good figure and a striking countenance are necessary, and a clear and sonorous voice is almost indispensable. In addition to this, it requires a thorough classical education, a power of observation, a good memory, and above all, a natural *genius* for the art, without which, no actor can rise to the highest standard of excellence.

As an instance of what *study* and *talent* combined, can effect, we need but point to Mr. Macready and Mr. Charles Kean, both of whom, in spite of physical disadvantages, and without a spark of the electric fire which burns in the heart of genius, have, nevertheless, succeeded in obtaining a reputation, to which, with all due deference to the opinions of others who think differently, they are far from being entitled.

## CHAPTER X.

Mr. Booth's Engagement in Philadelphia—Brown's Tragedy of "Sartorius"—Engagement at Boston—Booth's address to the audience—His pedestrian feat to Providence—Visit to New York—Engagement of Hamblin—Journey towards Richmond—Adventures on the road—A Theatrical Company at Booth's Farm—Mr. Booth "at home"—His four footed "Peacock"—Interesting *tableau*—Booth's voiceless companions—Performance at Richmond—Announcement of the "Apostate"—Synopsis of the Plot—Booth's "Pescara"—His return to the Farm.

IN January, 1832, Mr. Booth commenced an engagement in Philadelphia, at the Chestnut-street Theatre, in a new play, called "Sartorius," written by David Paul Brown, an eminent lawyer of that city. Mr. Booth's acting of this new part was really sublime, and drew crowds nightly, to witness its representation. The tragedy possesses considerable point and beauty, and some of the situations are highly dramatic. Why Mr. Booth has not since enacted it we cannot conceive, it being one of his most exquisite performances.

During the remainder of the year he went on a professional tour to New Orleans, Mobile, St. Louis, Louisville and Cincinnati, returned to his farm in Maryland in the month of June, and remained there during the season of the cholera.

In the fall of that year he accepted an engagement from Dana, to play in Boston, and was to receive twelve hundred dollars for nine nights' performance, Dana retaining the proceeds of his

benefit, and Booth not to be paid any money, until he had played the stipulated number of nights.

On the ninth evening, "Evadne" and "Amateurs and Actors" were to be performed, Mr. Booth being announced as *Lodovico* in the play, and *Jeffrey Muffincap* in the farce.

During his performance of the former character, being imperfect in the part, the audience manifested some disapprobation, at which Mr. Booth stepped forward to the foot lights and addressed the spectators as follows :—

"Ladies and gentlemen,—I understand you well ; Wilson's\* the tragedy-boy for you. You'd better get him to finish the part, and he's a good figure for the tragedy-boy in the farce ; I've other business to attend to, so I wish you all good night."

Neither entreaties nor threats of law suits could induce him to finish the performance, but he made his exit at once, and walked the entire distance to Providence, in a wretched state of mind, and bodily fatigue.

Dinneford, formerly Manager of the Bowery Theatre, at this period, kept a Lottery office in Providence. Booth called on him, and Dinneford, who has one of the kindest of hearts, used every exertion to resuscitate and bring him to himself.

He soon after left Providence and arrived in New York, where he met Hamblin, who offered him a year's engagement, to perform three nights a week, at a salary of a hundred and twenty-five dollars per week, which Booth accepted.

Hamblin then advised Mr. Phillips, better known by the cognomen of "Nosey Phillips," to hire the Richmond Theatre, in Virginia, and that he (Hamblin), Booth; and the popular and unfor-

\* Wilson was the tragedian of the opposition house, and a most indifferent one, having no qualifications for an actor. Nature too had "marred his fair proportions," by making him excessively bow-legged.



fortunate Miss Vincent would proceed thither—to write immediately, use their names, and he would be sure to obtain it. Phillips did so, and hired the Theatre, engaged the cheapest company he could find (his usual style of management), and they all started from this city, for Virginia. They reached Philadelphia in safety, but on the road to Baltimore, when about two miles from Booth's residence, the stage broke down, and Richard, Hamlet, Ghost, Ophelia, Grave-digger, and "Fat Jack," were all huddled promiscuously into one common pile together. Their "*exit*" from this *stage* was *sans cérémonie*.

There being no opportunity or prospect of proceeding on their journey until noon of the ensuing day, Booth proposed to walk to his farm, tendering them all the accommodation that his premises would allow.

The offer was accepted, and the whole party arrived at Booth's residence, where the principal room in the house was shared by Mrs. Booth with Miss Vincent, the servants vacating theirs to Booth and Hamblin.

Hamblin, who is subject to the asthma, had an attack of his complaint during the night, which prevented him from sleeping, so, like a philosopher, he pulled out his pipe and stramonium which he always carried as a preventive to the malady, and enveloped himself and Booth in a cloud of smoke.—Occasionally he apologized for wrapping his "Ancient" in a mist, but "Iago" did not allow his desire for repose to interfere with his companion's endeavor to rid himself of his affliction, although in his heart, he cursed the unfortunate hour in which Hamblin contracted the asthma.

Hamblin, at last, concluded to adopt another remedy, and called for gin and water, in the hope of getting to sleep, but unfortunately, or rather perhaps *fortunately*, Booth never allowed any alcohol to be used at his farm.

Mr. Booth at home, and Mr. Booth abroad, were two different

personages. When under the excitement of playing, or at the social board, he was tempted to indulge in that stimulus in which men are too apt to endeavor to drown their cares, but which, generally, results in depriving them of their wits.

When at home, he was temperate, frugal and industrious, and scrupulously particular in his habits and method of living. He practised all the manual exercises of the husbandman, ploughing, harrowing, sowing seed, and carrying his vegetables to market in a wagon, drawn by his favorite "Peacock," and disposing of his stock to the best advantage. He was known for miles around the neighborhood as "Farmer Booth," and "Peacock" was equally familiar to the people in the vicinity, and in the Baltimore market.

There are many amusing anecdotes afloat, relative to this four footed "Peacock ;" among others, that Flynn rode him into town from the farm, and not being acquainted with his peculiarities, was subjected to a great variety of sportive tricks, and created as much sensation upon entering Baltimore as did the famous "John Gilpin," in his ride through Islington. "Peacock" being attached to the market and its vicinity, kept on the "even tenor of his way," in spite of whip and rein, and poor Flynn was forced to be "in the market," although at the same time he had an "engagement" elsewhere. Booth, in adopting this system of dividing his time between literary occupations and corporeal labor, was enabled to preserve his health, and even now, in the "sear and yellow leaf" of his accumulated years, manifests much of the spirit and energy of his younger days.

After carrying his produce to market, a distance of twenty-three miles, he would often play Richard in Baltimore, where he kept his wardrobe, in case he desired to use it.

But we return to the farm, where, the morning following the arrival of the players, was presented a most picturesque *tableau*.

It was a new comedy with an old title, "Town and Country,"

or, "Which is Best?" There was "Reuben Glenroy" himself, who seemed to enjoy the scene, and being familiar with the vicissitudes of life, smiled to witness the effects that had been produced on a corps of the "sock and buskin," by a *stage* accident.

There was the light comedian, who thought it too dark to rise from his slumbers; the heavy tragedian, weighing in his mind the feasibility of vacating his bed; there was "Justice Greedy," with "fair round belly," ruminating over the anticipations of a breakfast, and Nosey "Marrall," disturbing the harmony of the scene, by his nasal music; there stood "Macbeth," washing out his throat, which had become parched from excessive smoking; there was the "Grave-digger," zealously laboring to dig the beard from his chin with an edgeless razor, while in the midst of this group three or four slaves might have been discovered looking for utensils to provide breakfast.

The morning passed away pleasantly enough, a good breakfast having restored the equanimity of the company.

"Why, Booth," said Hamblin, "how do you manage to kill the time, without company? You must be solitary here."

"I am never without company," said Booth. "I am surrounded by congenial spirits; I converse and hold counsel with the great and good of all ages. Look—there are Shelley, and Byron, and Wordsworth; here are 'rare Ben Jonson,' Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shakspeare and Milton; with them, time never wearies, and the eloquent teachings that fall from their leaves, are counsellors and guides. These are my companions," said Booth, triumphantly pointing to his library and his "old arm-chair," "and I am never *less* alone, than when alone."

Late in the afternoon the company all proceeded to Baltimore, and thence to Richmond, where they opened to a tremendous house, Hamblin receiving a clear one half of each night's receipts.

On the fourth night, Booth was announced to appear in his



great character of *Pescara*, in Sheil's play of the "Apostate," which the reader will recollect was written expressly for him, and which he had declined playing at Covent Garden Theatre.

The piece is founded upon the revolt of the Moors against Philip the Second, but it is entirely too melo-dramatic in its cast, to be dignified with the appellation of "tragedy," considered in the signification in which the term is generally used ; yet the play is full of incident, and abounds with passages of great beauty.

The principal feature of the drama is a reciprocated attachment between *Hemeya*, a descendant of a Moorish King, and *Florinda*, a Spanish maiden, the daughter of *Count Alvarez*, who, alike with his countrymen, detests even the name of Moor.

In the first act, the palace of *Alvarez* is discovered in flames, and the father, in the frenzy of his fear, swears to give his daughter's hand to whomsoever shall bear her to him in safety. This, in the meantime, *Hemeya* successfully accomplishes. While the lovers are exchanging vows of congratulation and endearment, *Pescara*, Governor of Granada, who has been nursed amid the horrors of the Inquisition, and who had long since sought the hand of *Florinda*, makes his entrance. This scene is highly dramatic. The lovers are in the act of embracing, and *Hemeya* says :—

\* \* \* \* "Thou fair creature,  
Who now shall part us ?"

"I," says *Pescara*, whose appearance (when Booth was the representative), at the moment of entrance, was a study for an artist.

The dark and ferocious look—the crafty, stealthy bearing, heightened by the Spanish dress, were in admirable keeping with the character.

After a short dialogue with *Alvarez*, he draws a roll of parchment from his bosom, and says to *Hemeya* :—



“ Here, Moor, within thy grasp I plant a serpent,  
 And, as it stings, think ’tis Pescara’s answer—  
 This very night it reach’d me from Madrid,  
 And thou art first to hear it ; look you here ;  
 If Caucasus were heap’d between you both,  
 With all his snows,—his snows have not the pow’r  
 To freeze your amorous passion half so soon  
 As Philip’s will. Farewell—but not for ever !”

The dark and sinister look that he casts on the lovers, as he pronounces the words “ Farewell, but not for ever !” is almost prophetic of what is to follow.

*Pescara* has the authority of Philip, and no alternative is left *Hemeya* but to renounce his creed and become a Christian, or to abandon the maiden.

The second act discovers *Malec* (in whose care the dying father of *Hemeya* placed him) just returned from Granada. He urges his *protégé* to renounce the girl, maintain his faith, head the Moors, and free his countrymen. When almost decided to comply, *Florinda* appears, and love triumphing over patriotism (as it does over every other passion), *Hemeya* renounces Mahomet and becomes a Christian.

*Florinda*, while felicitating herself on the event, discovers the inquisitors, headed by *Pescara*. A dialogue ensues between them, in which he recounts a dream. Mr. Booth’s recital of this was “ express and admirable.”

The peculiar beauties of his acting in the “ Apostate,” were his masterly powers of gesticulation and emphasis, which, in his representation of *Pescara*, shone in most perfect splendor.

The description of his dream to *Florinda* was at once fearful and sublime. The imagination was awakened to the very acme of its power, when, with the mighty magic of his art, he relates the fearful vision :—

\* \* \* \* \* “ On my couch  
 Last night, I long lay sleepless ; I revolved  
 The scorns, the contumelies I have suffered,  
 But will not brook ; at last, sleep closed my eyelids,  
 And then methought I saw the am’rous Moor  
 In all the transports of exulting passion,  
 And I stood by, chained to a fiery pillar,  
 Condemned to gaze for ever ; while two fiends  
 Did grin and mow upon me.  
 Senseless I fell with rage. As thus I lay,  
 From forth the yawning earth a figure rose,  
 Whose stature reach’d to heaven ; his robes appear’d  
 Woven out of solid fire !—around his head  
 A serpent twined his huge, gigantic folds ;  
 And on his front, in burning characters,  
 Was written ‘ Vengeance ! ’ ”

Mr. Booth’s recital of this dream no language can properly describe. The “ yawning earth ” indeed seemed, to our imagination, before him, and the “ huge gigantic form,” slowly rising to heaven, was almost palpable to our “ mind’s eye.”

It was one of the charms of his acting, that he was so “ terribly in earnest,” he imparted the same feeling to the audience.

The sudden transition from impetuous rage, to the subdued and “ still small voice ” of withering sarcasm, was unapproachable.

In the third act, *Malec* is condemned to die for treason, and an interesting scene occurs where *Pescara* taunts the Moor for his apostasy. Mr. Booth, in this act, was the personification of a fiend. How admirably did he read these lines :

“ I tell thee, music ; thou shalt have the groans  
 Of grey-hair’d Malec ringing in thine ears !—  
 The crackling flames in which he perishes  
 Shall hiss upon thee when thou art softly laid  
 Within the bosom of the amorous fair ! ”

and the cool, unmitigated contempt, as he measures the "apostate Moor," and the look of withering scorn with which he regards *Hemeya* :—

"Nay, put thy sword within its sheath again—  
Granada's governor will never stoop  
Down to thy wretched level!"

In the last act, the Moors are triumphant, *Pescara* slain, and the *dramatis personæ* arranged according to the most approved method of poetical justice.

We have not attempted to give the plot entire, but merely to illustrate the character of *Pescara*, believing Mr. Booth's representation of it as faultless a performance as was ever exhibited on the stage. Indeed, were we disposed to be hypercritical, we should be at a loss to know where he was not perfect. His dark eye glared with an almost unearthly ferocity—his tread was firm and determined—his voice clear, sonorous and energetic, and his gesticulation, graceful and appropriate.

We will hazard the opinion that no one who ever saw Booth's *Pescara*, when the actor was "in the vein" for playing, has forgotten it. It was nature itself.

As we have already remarked, on the fourth night of the engagement at Richmond, he was to appear as *Pescara*. On the morning previous, he received a letter announcing the sickness of his child.

Booth, being devotedly attached to his family, immediately returned to his farm, giving no intimation either of the contents of the letter or of his intentions. Money, solicitations, engagements, or anything else would have had no effect in inducing the tragedian to remain when there was sickness at home.

After Booth was gone, the magnet of attraction was wanting, and the engagement fell to the ground.

## CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Hamblin's return to New York—Special embassy to Booth—Engagement with Duffy—Booth's opening night in New York—A month's performance alternately in New York and Philadelphia—Representation of "Oroonoko"—Booth's threat from the stage—Flynn's visit to Bel-Air—Booth at his farm—Dialogue between Booth and Flynn—Arrival in New York—Booth's performance—His Richard the Third—His return to the farm.

AFTER the sudden termination of the Richmond adventure, Hamblin returned to New York, annoyed and disappointed by Booth's procedure. Here he remained superintending the affairs of his theatre, under the control of his stage-manager, Mr. Flynn, who was conducting the establishment in a prosperous manner, which made amends to Hamblin for his other unprofitable speculations.

It was now proposed by Hamblin that Flynn should go to Maryland and bring Booth, offering to cancel his engagement, provided he could induce him to play three nights a week for a period of three months, conscious that Flynn was the only person who could induce him to accede to the proposition.

Flynn left for Bel-Air, and after spending two days at the farm, prevailed upon Booth to accept Hamblin's offer. They accordingly started in company, and in passing through Philadelphia they encountered Mr. Duffy, then manager of the Arch Street Theatre, in conjunction with Forrest and Jones.

Mr. Duffy offered Booth one hundred dollars a night for his



services during the "off nights" that he did not play in New York, which the latter accepted. The engagement was drawn up and signed on board the steamer, just before she started.

Booth and Flynn arrived in New York, and the former opened at the Bowery Theatre in *Richard the Third*, to a house which yielded thirteen hundred dollars.

After the evening's performances, Hamblin ascertained that Booth had agreed to play the off nights at the Arch Street Theatre, in Philadelphia, and proposed to Flynn that he should accompany him to and fro between the two cities, or he would never fulfil the engagement; nor is it probable that he would have done so unless some such measure had been resorted to. This arrangement being concluded, Booth played every night alternately in New York and Philadelphia, for a period of a month, at a time when the travel was much more tedious than at present, the stage-coach, "dragging its slow length along," being now superseded by the swift and fiery rail car.

The last night of his engagement, the play of "Oroonoko"\* was performed, much to the annoyance of Booth, it being a character that he disliked to play. Having hurried carelessly through it, and betraying no interest or feeling in the part, in his death scene there was a slight symptom of disapprobation manifested by the audience. Whether it arose from the play, or from Booth's indifferent performance, we are unable to say, but after killing himself (in a theatrical sense, and according to poetical justice), he arose, walked to the foot lights, and looking

\* A ludicrous incident is related by the biographer of the celebrated Barton Booth (who flourished in the seventeenth century), in the same character (Oroonoko). Happening to wipe his face as he entered on the stage, he appeared with a pie-bald countenance, which set all the audience laughing, till he discovered and rectified the error.

the audience full in the face, exclaimed :—“ I’ll sell you as General Jackson did ; I’ll *veto* you ! ”\*

During one of Booth’s engagements at the Bowery, he had promised Flynn to play for his benefit, and as the time approached when the performance was to take place according to announcement, being fearful that the tragedian’s memory might prove treacherous, Flynn started for Bel-Air, where Booth found an agreeable place of retirement after his laborious efforts at the theatre.

He not only superintended the management of his farm, but “drove his team afield,” like any other practical farmer.

It must have been a novel sight to see the great tragedian disposing of his turnips and cabbages in market, for such it was his custom to do. When he was unsuccessful in selling them at a very considerable profit, he not unfrequently gave them away. At other times the height of his ambition seems to have been to *sell* out his stock, regardless of consequences.

A friend who was intimately acquainted with the tragedian, informed us that Booth was engaged to play Richard one Saturday evening, in Baltimore, but that neither threats nor solicitations could induce him to go to the theatre until he had made a satisfactory disposition of his vegetables. The consequence was, that the manager was compelled to send a purchaser, by which means he succeeded in obtaining his services.

Philosophy might speculate upon the causes that would induce a man to risk the receipt of several hundred dollars, rather than not realize the proceeds of the sale of a few baskets of vegetables, but it would be a fruitless effort to endeavor to solve the mysteries of Booth’s eccentricities.

\* This was about the period when the political papers discussed the propriety of General Jackson’s Veto Messages, which he issued in great abundance.

After reaching Booth's residence, Flynn approached the house, and discovering, as he thought, a boy digging a potatoe patch, he addressed him accordingly :

"Holloa, boy ! where's Mr. Booth ?"

"Here, at your service," said the representative of Richard, looking up. "What the deuce has brought *you* here ?"

"Why, Booth, don't you recollect that you promised to play for my benefit ?"

"Did I ? very well ; come into the house."

Booth changed his clothes, and ten minutes after, they were on the road to New York.

They arrived on the morning of the third day, and at night, Booth appeared as *Richard the Third*.

At an early hour, the house was not only crowded from pit to dome, but the corners of the stage were occupied by boys, who, not finding accommodations in the pit, which was already filled to overflowing, boldly monopolized a considerable portion of the establishment, not set apart for the audience. Indeed, the number of young gentlemen who made their "first appearance on any stage," on that occasion, was not inconsiderable.

Up went the curtain, and on came the "crook'd back tyrant," his hands and face reddened by exposure to the sun, and health and vigor apparent in every movement. We never saw him to better advantage. There was a firmness and dignity in his tread, a brilliancy in his eye and a manliness in the tones of his voice, worthy of his palmiest days.

In the whole range of the acted drama, there is no character which requires such a constant exercise of the physical powers, as that of Shakspeare's Richard. All the sterner passions that harbor in the breast of man are introduced, and nothing but genius can delineate the many and varied phases of Gloster's character. Every other individual is subordinate to Richard,

who, through nearly every scene of the five acts, is before the audience. No time is left for the repose of the actor ; consequently, the majority of its representatives reserve their powers for the last acts. Indeed, justice requires that we should confess that Mr. Booth, during the latter part of his career, has not been guiltless of the same custom on all occasions, but if he was often careless in the early scenes, he redeemed the whole in the closing acts of the play. Mr. Booth, however, ere he had fallen into the "sere and yellow leaf," was gifted with extraordinary physical strength, his voice being as clear and unfaltering at the end of the play as at its commencement.

On the occasion of Flynn's benefit, he seemed determined to surpass himself. With mind and body renovated by fresh air and manly exercise, with a house thronged with spectators and cheered by the vociferous cries of an enthusiastic audience, he went to the performance as though he found a positive pleasure in acting.

As the play proceeded, he seemed to gather renewed strength. Admirable was the opening soliloquy, and beautiful the scene with Lady Anne. His ruminations previous to the murder of the princes, his interview with Buckingham, his glowing aspirations for the crown, his measureless ambition, his determined and inflexible spirit, were all given with a fidelity and truth to nature never surpassed.

Notwithstanding Booth's diminutive figure, it needed but a glance of the spectator, to individualize the man. A stranger who had never seen him, would have had no difficulty in separating him from the nonentities (for such they appeared to be) who surrounded him.

In Richard, his small person seemed to *expand*, and the genius of the man betrayed itself in every look and gesture. With reckless indifference, he makes his way to his blood-cemented



crown, crushing obstacles and commanding circumstances, until the mind of the spectator almost imagines that he is aided by some supernal power, in the career of his wild and romantic ambition.

Even death has no terrors for the guilty monarch ; and when Richard's life is closed by the desperate encounter with Richmond, the audience regard the issue of the combat as an unnatural result. His fierceness and determination, his lion-heart, that laughs to scorn all idea of danger, the savage fury with which he attacks Richmond, all seem to tend towards his triumph, and even in his last agonies he cries :—

—————“ The vast renown thou hast acquir'd  
In conquering Richard, does afflict him more  
Than e'en his body's parting with his soul.”

One of the proudest triumphs of Booth's genius was in the tent scene. From his couch, where he had been writhing in the agony of his dreams from the terror which the palpable images of those whom he had murdered inspired, he rushed forward to the footlights, his face of the ashy hue of death, his limbs trembling, his eyes rolling and gleaming with an unearthly glare, and his whole face and form convulsed with intense excitement.

It was the very acme of acting, if such it can be called, and the death-like silence of the audience was a higher compliment to the actor, than the long and thundering plaudits that followed the performance.

The fight with Richmond, the death grapple, the syncope, were all the counterpart of nature, and the curtain fell on Richard, who, refusing even the expenses of his tour, returned to his farm to complete his potato patch.

## CHAPTER XII.

Booth's Occasional Performances at the Bowery—Mr. Hamblin's Dinner Party—Jack Reeve—Placide—Hackett—Flynn—Hamblin—Booth—Some Account of their Sayings and Doings—Hamblin's Remarks—Jack Reeve's Observations—Booth's Apology and Flynn's Rejoinder—Placide's Acknowledgments—Adjournment to the Theatre—Othello made darker—Booth's Sudden Disappearance—Flynn's Apology to the Audience—His Pursuit of Booth—Discovery of the Tragedian's Retreat—Peculiar Method of Satisfying the Public—Booth as Sir Giles Overreach—Performance of "Julius Cæsar"—New Reading of Brutus—The Effects of Snuff—A Farcical Tragedy—Booth's Departure for New Orleans.

FOR a period of two years, Booth remained at his farm, with the exception of an occasional professional visit to New York, Philadelphia or Boston ; and whenever Hamblin was engaged in the production of a new piece and desired an attraction while it was in a state of preparation, he invariably sent Flynn to Bel-Air to bring on Booth, who always drew large audiences, and received a hundred dollars for each performance.

On one of these occasions he was announced for *Iago*, to Hamblin's *Othello*. The afternoon of the same day, Hamblin gave a dinner party at his house, which proved to be a very *recherché* affair.

Among the guests were several distinguished members of the "sock and buskin." There was poor Jack Reeve, with his "quips and cranks" that "set the table in a roar," and whose jolly, bacchanalian face formed an admirable contrast to that of

the dignified and gentlemanly countenance of Mr. Henry Placide, *alias* "Sir Harcourt Courtly," a character, by the way, that is "his own" literally; the quick-witted Hackett, as sparkling and full of life as an uncorked bottle of champagne; Flynn, with his undiminished fountain of mirth, and looking the "Ancient" to his majestic and classically-headed friend Hamblin, who never had a better "foil to set him off." What a pity they ever separated! Well might Hamblin have said, when he parted with Flynn—

"Fortune and Antony part here."

Had they remained with each other, one would not now have been a dead letter in the theatrical world, and the other a strolling "Temperance" lecturer!

And there sat Booth, more like "a looker-on in Venice," than a participator in the scene, but doing justice to the subject of "internal improvement," and in spite of the new doctrine of "repudiation," *liquidating* to a large extent.

The cloth being removed, Hackett proposed the health of Hamblin, who returned thanks in an appropriate speech; he "felt a proud satisfaction in seeing congregated at his table, gentlemen whose names were so distinguished in the theatrical world; the occasion would long be remembered with pleasing associations, and he trusted his friends knew him too well to suspect him of *acting* on such an occasion; that whatever characters he enacted on the stage, that of the 'host' he trusted to perform, at home, to the satisfaction of all," and finally drank "the health of the company."

Flynn then proposed "the health of John Reeve," who immediately dropt his brandy and water, and looking very grave at the company (accompanied with one of his peculiar leers and winks at Flynn), said, that "he was aware of the unmerited

honor that was bestowed upon him ; that he had no intention of making a speech, but to propose a sentiment, and as they emptied their glasses, they might have the satisfaction of performing their duty to the country, in ridding it of *evil spirits* ; he was one of a committee appointed to banish brandy from the land, and he now called upon all present, except the *placid* Placide, whom he observed indulged in nothing stronger than wine, for assistance, hoping they would agree with the sentiment he should propose, which was, ‘*Down with all spirituous liquors,*’ ” and “down with all spirituous liquors” echoed around the table, the actors following the advice of Hamlet in suiting “the action to the word and the word to the action.”

Booth was next called upon, but he declined making a speech ; he was “no orator as Brutus was ;” “he would leave it to his friend Flynn, who was a good extemporaneous speaker, and whose powers of invention were marvellous.”

Flynn rose and “denied what Booth had just said ; he knew that his friend could speak if he felt inclined ; he was the greatest tragedian in the world, and his friend Hamblin the greatest manager ; the Bowery Theatre was the greatest establishment in the universe, and all the talent in the globe was concentrated there ; it was characterized for its liberal remuneration to talent, and for the promptness of its payments ; being connected with Mr. Hamblin, of course he could not say so much in its favor as he desired to do, and he would therefore close his remarks by proposing ‘the health of Mr. Placide.’ ”

Mr. Placide made his acknowledgments, and took occasion to find fault with everything connected with theatres, managers, actors, and audiences ; complimented Mr. Hamblin on the taste and good feeling he had manifested, and sat down amidst the applause of the company.

But it would be useless to attempt a description of all the sayings and doings of the occasion ; let it suffice that the



hours passed away amidst "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," with song and sentiment, until Mr. Flynn hinted to "Iago" (Booth), the important fact that the hour of performance was approaching, and that some preparation was necessary.

The party accordingly adjourned, Hamblin and Booth behind the scene, to dress, and Hackett and Reeve to a private box, to witness the performance.

Flynn, upon going into Hamblin's dressing-room, found the *Iago* of the evening employed in blacking his Moor-ship; he seemed to be performing the operation very effectually, with the apparent determination of leaving an indelible impression upon his friend's neck and face, and totally forgetting his own preparation for "Iago."

Hamblin, turning around suddenly, asked Booth why he did not go and dress for his part.

"Oh yes," said Booth, "I forgot that I had to play to-night. Come, Flynn, I wish to speak to you."

Flynn accompanied him to the stage door of the theatre, when Booth said, "Now, Flynn, you must get another *Iago*—I'm off," and he kept his word, and disappeared. While this scene was transpiring behind the curtain, in front the house was rapidly filling with spectators, who had assembled to witness Hamblin and Booth in "*Othello*," and were vociferous in the endeavor to have the curtain ascend.

Flynn held a consultation with the manager, and acquainted him with the fact of Booth's departure.

What was to be done? Where was to be found a substitute for *Iago*, and who was to make the apology? Flynn proposed to play it himself, having formerly enacted the character with considerable success, but the Bowery audience having always seen Flynn in comedy, Hamblin concluded, and justly, that the association would render his own part of *Othello* ridiculous, and therefore declined.

It was finally concluded that Mr. John Woodhull should play the "Ancient," and Flynn be deputed to address the audience, which he did. Approaching the foot lights with the usual appendage, a white pocket-handkerchief, in his hand, he said :—

"Ladies and gentlemen ; I am sorry to appear before you as an apologist, and under circumstances so unfortunate. Mr. Booth came to the theatre to prepare for the part announced in the bills ; he remained a few moments, and in one of his peculiar starts, rushed out of the theatre, followed by the stage door keeper, was pursued as far as the Battery, suddenly disappeared, and it is feared, has drowned himself. Under events so unexpected, and so much to be deplored, we have to offer in the way of a substitute, Mr. John Woodhull. Those who are dissatisfied with this arrangement can have their money returned to them at the door, but I trust, ladies and gentlemen, that you will extend towards us your indulgence, under circumstances which it was not in our power to avoid."

There was a perfect silence throughout the house, a portion of the audience believing in the truth of the statement, and the residue somewhat incredulous. A feeling of disappointment was evinced, however, and there soon became a rush for the doors. About three hundred dollars were returned to those who left, still leaving seven hundred and fifty in the treasury.

The performance proceeded without interruption, and at its close, Flynn went in search of Booth. After visiting various places, he finally discovered him at a public house adjoining the Park Theatre, mounted on a table and haranguing in a bar-room, a hundred and fifty people, relative to the wants and distresses of the inhabitants of Texas, and endeavoring to obtain volunteers to emigrate thither.

Hamblin, mortified and disappointed by Mr. Booth's conduct,

resolved that he should never again play at the theatre, but being suddenly overtaken by his old complaint, the asthma, Flynn inserted an advertisement in the bills of the day, bearing the signature of "J. B. Booth," making an ample apology for his disappearance, and announced him for *Sir Giles Overreach*, a few days after.

He appeared, accordingly, to a house crammed to suffocation. Instead of being hissed off the stage, as was generally anticipated, he never received a more cordial reception, the audience reiterating cheer upon cheer, until the applause became almost deafening. He played for seven nights afterwards, to houses equally as crowded, and thus were Texas and her volunteers the means of drawing hundreds of dollars into the treasury of the Bowery Theatre, and of gaining for Booth a higher position in the estimation of the audience.

During this engagement of Booth, the tragedy of "Julius Cæsar" was produced, Booth playing *Cassius*.

The representative of Brutus having been dining with some friends, in the endeavor to drown the remembrance of some domestic trouble, had taken more than his usual quantity of wine. During the performance, the audience perceiving his situation, manifested some disapprobation. At the close of the first act, conscious that he had overstepped the bounds of prudence, he asked Booth what he "should do to get through with his part?"

Booth, in a spirit of mischief, replied, "use my remedy."

"Hey?—what's that?" said Brutus.

"Why, get some vinegar in a tea cup, put some snuff in it, mix the two together, pour it into your hand and inhale it through your nose."

Brutus, not dreaming of the consequences that were to ensue, imbibed a sufficient quantity to produce a fit of sneezing, which he found it difficult to overcome.

After entering the stage, he saluted the audience with a sneeze, and struggled hard to smother the effects of the snuff, in which he succeeded, until the attempt was visible in the contortions of his face. The following reply to Cassius was rendered thus:—

“ ————— Cassius,

Be not deceived ; if I have veil'd my look, (*sneeze !*)

I turn the trouble of my countenance

Merely upon myself ; (*sneeze !*) vexed I am (*sneeze !*)

Of late, with passions of some difference (*sneeze !*)

Conceptions only proper to myself (*blast that snuff !*)

Which (*sneeze !*) give some (*sneeze !*) soil perhaps to my behavior.”

All his efforts were unavailing to check the effects of Booth's remedy, which proved worse than the disease, and the “ noblest Roman of them all ” was taken by the nose in the most *unromantic* manner.

The sneezing operation, like that of yawning, became contagious, or perhaps the visitors of the Bowery Theatre were “ up to snuff,” for immediately after one of Brutus's convulsions, a prodigious sneeze echoed from the audience. What rendered the affair still more ludicrous, was, that the representative of Brutus several times *attempted* to sneeze, but failing, the audience did it for him, and then, when they expected the actor was quiet, he would give a final one, which caused the whole house to echo with laughter ; thus was the tragedy converted into one of the most laughable farces ever enacted upon the stage.\*

From New York, Booth went to New Orleans and Mobile, where his whims and eccentricities again assumed a “ questionable shape,” and there we leave him for the present, under the management of Mr. Russell, while we devote a few pages to Mr. Hamblin.

\* Mark Antony told Booth after the play, that he thought his “ Cassius ” was a performance “ not to be sneezed at.”



## CHAPTER XIII.

Birth of Mr. Hamblin—First appearance on the Stage—Anecdote—Engagement at Drury Lane—His representation of Hamlet—Engagement at Bath—Incident at the Brighton Theatre—*Début* in America—Management of the Bowery Theatre—His difficulties and subsequent Success—Destruction of the Theatre—Benefit at the National Theatre—Poetical Address—Erection of the Bowery by Dinneford—Mr. Hamblin's arrival in London—Engagement at Covent Garden Theatre—Return to America—Mr. Hamblin's abilities as an actor Examined—Green-room Incident—Hamblin's Theatrical Management—Jas. Anderson—Concluding Remarks.

THOMAS S. HAMBLIN was born in White Chapel, in the city of London, on the 14th of May, 1798, and made his first appearance in 1815, at Sadler's Wells, in the recitation of *Rolla's Address to the Peruvians*, taken from Sheridan's Adaptation of "Pizarro."

In the year 1816, he made his *début* as *Trueman* in "George Barnwell," at the East London Theatre, and in 1817, was engaged at Drury Lane to play\* subordinate characters.

\* In a work devoted to the Drama, published at about this period, we find the following :—

"*Theatrical Murder*.—Mr. Hamblin who played the bravo in Soane's 'Dwarf of Naples,' had murdered *Imma*, in the progress of his part, while disguised by the dress of a page. A well known theatrical character, on the occurrence of this incident, remarked that, 'it was lucky that Mr. Hamblin's character was a short one, or else, instead of murdering *one page* in the drama, he would have murdered many more.' "

Among others, we find him announced as *Carlos* in "Isabella," *De Wilton* in "Flodden Field," and *Lewson* in the "Gamester."

The sudden illness of a Mr. Hicks, who was announced to perform *Hamlet*, afforded him an opportunity of appearing as the "Prince of Denmark," and as is usual in such cases, although having previously enacted the same part at the provincial theatres, he was called upon "at a very short notice," to supply his place.

His success, however, though very good, was not extraordinary.

He afterwards played the *second* characters, but, like the majority of actors,\* desired to play the *first*.

The manager, however, not entertaining so exalted an opinion of his merits as *he* did himself, declined acceding to his wishes, and the result was, that Hamblin broke through his engagement and went to Bath, where he played the principal characters, at a salary of three pounds per week, which was afterwards increased to five, he having proved more successful than the manager at first anticipated.

During one of his engagements at Brighton, on the occasion of his benefit, he was announced for *Richard the Third*, and *Roderick Dhu* in the "Lady of the Lake," Mr. Barry, now stage manager of the Park Theatre, being cast for *Fitz James*, and Mr. Flynn, now the temperance advocate, for *Malcolm*.

Having no copy of the melo-drama, the piece was performed, Mr. Hamblin prompting the whole company from memory.

\* It is an astonishing fact that almost every actor believes himself a second Garrick, and capable of performing any character either in tragedy or comedy.

We have encountered a great many performers in our time, and we never knew one "*stock actor*" who did not believe himself slighted by the stage manager, in the distribution of characters.

From Bath, Mr. Hamblin proceeded to Dublin and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

He continued several years in these and the neighboring cities, and in 1825 arrived in this country and opened at the Park Theatre as *Hamlet*, with considerable *éclat*.

After playing an engagement, he visited Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston, Augusta, New Orleans, and other places throughout the Union, and was well received, though not generally admired. He had, however, to contend against the impression which Kean, Cooper, Booth, and Conway had already made, and being far removed from them in point of merit, of course did not meet with that support which otherwise would have attended his efforts.

In the year 1830, he hired the Bowery Theatre, in conjunction with James H. Hackett, and during the first month, the establishment drew crowded houses nightly, and yielded a handsome revenue.

Mr. Hackett, satisfied to follow the old adage of "letting well alone," retired from the concern, fearing that its success would only be commensurate to the novelty of a new management.

Hamblin struggled alone for some years, and contracted considerable debt, but in the summer of 1835, the engagement of Forrest and Celeste, who proved very attractive, and the production of several *spectacles*, among which was the "Last Days of Pompeii," that cleared him ten thousand dollars, and "Norman Leslie," that yielded nearly six thousand dollars receipts the first week, enabled him to rid himself of his embarrassments, and purchase the *theatre*,\* the ground being mortgaged to Mr. Astor for more than its value.

\* The Bowery Theatre was first opened under the management of Charles Gilfert in 1827, and burnt to the ground in 1829. It was then rebuilt by the late Mr. Henry Astor, and again burnt in 1836, while under the charge of Mr. Hamblin. It was then rebuilt by Mr. Dinneford, and burnt again, for the third time, in 1838. Again, Phœnix-like, a new building sprang

On the 16th of September, 1836, the building was destroyed by fire, and Hamblin lost "at one fell swoop," *sixty thousand dollars*. Some of his friends, sympathizing with his misfortune, proposed a benefit, and it was "got up" at the National Theatre, then under the management of Messrs. Flynn and Willard.

The attraction offered on the occasion was worthy of the cause. The entertainments consisted of Shakspeare's play of "Henry the Fourth," Mr. Hamblin playing *Hotspur* ; Mr. Hackett, *Falstaff* ; Mr. Barrett, *Prince of Wales* ; Mr. Flynn, *Poins* ; Messrs. Mitchell and Placide, *Carriers* ; and Miss Clifton, *Lady Percy*. This was followed by the interlude of "Three Weeks after Marriage," with Mr. Downton as *Old Drugget* ; Mr. Barrett as *Sir Charles Rackett* ; and Mrs. Barrett as *Lady Rackett* : after which, the lamented Power played *Dr. O'Toole* in the "Irish Tutor," and Mdlle Celeste *Narramattah*, in the "Wept of the Wish-ton-Wish."

In the course of the evening Miss Susan Cushman sang Barry Cornwall's song of "The Sea," and Mrs. Flynn delivered an address, written for the occasion by Mr. James Nack, which we insert, not only as a literary curiosity, the author being deaf and dumb, but for its intrinsic merit as a composition :

#### "ADDRESS.

"WHAT blaze of worth and beauty meets my sight,  
Thronged as the stars that fill the halls of night !  
Hail, bright array ! hail to the hearts sincere  
Whose warm and generous impulse leads you here !  
In other years a youth unknown to fame  
And fortune, o'er the world of waters came,

from the ashes of the old one, under Hamblin's direction, to share the same fate as its predecessors, in 1845, but in the same year it was rebuilt by Jackson, opened in August, and is now in successful operation.



Unfriended, battled with misfortune's wave,  
And stood alone the storms of life to brave.

But ah ! not long in this benignant land  
Without a friend is merit left to stand ;  
To kindred souls its magic it imparts,  
And leads the stranger to your heart of hearts.

Cheered by your smile, in your applause elate,  
He rose triumphant o'er the storms of fate,  
Before his feet the tide of fortune rolled,  
And fame enwreathed his brow with *purser* gold.  
Repaid for all his perils overcome,  
He found his best of homes in freedom's home.

Ambitious still your loud applause to own,  
With every gem he graced the drama's throne ;  
And genius hailed you, there, as to her shrine,  
To wield for you her talisman divine,  
The world to centre in her magic ring  
And worlds unknown before the vision bring ;  
Through time and through eternity advance,  
Showing their wonders on a moment's glance,  
And for the forms created by her wand  
Your generous spirit's sympathy command.  
When calling up the mysteries of the soul,  
Where passions softly glide or wildly roll,  
Where ' smiles the young rose-lipp'd cherub,' love,  
Where hatred scowls, or vengeance laughs above  
Its humbled foe, or scorn looks withering down,  
Or anguish writhes beneath oppression's frown,  
Or frenzy raves, or rages fierce despair,  
Or terror starts the eye and thrills the hair.

To show triumphant in the war of fate,  
The virtue which you love and emulate,  
To wither guilt by your indignant flash,  
And folly by your smile of scorn abash ;  
Or from your mind unwelcome care to steal  
And o'er it bid the god of laughter reel ;  
Or softly waft the melting soul along  
Upon the sweetly-gushing tide of song,

While sylphine forms meandering in the dance  
Like aerial spirits float upon the glance.

And Hamblin's self sublime before you trod  
In form and bearing like the poet's god,  
And breathed, inspired, the oracles of flame,  
That from the sacred sun of Shakspeare came,  
And gave to sight the creatures of his breath—  
The princely Dane, the moralist of death,  
Or him who noblest of the Romans fell,  
Or fated Macbeth, braving earth and hell,  
Or wronged Othello, o'er whose bursting heart,  
He bade your generous tears resistless start.

In these and others of heroic mien  
He breathed his soul upon the lofty scene ;  
But while resplendent in his sphere he shone,  
He cherished other talents than his own,  
With liberal heart, and hand that would not spare,  
On merit he bestowed his fostering care,  
Brought native genius from oblivion's night,  
And winged to glory's sun its eagle flight.  
But lo ! destruction like a demon came,  
And smote the temple with his wings of flame !  
The toil of years one moment overthrew,  
And blasted all his treasures—*all but you !*

Rich in your favor, strong in strength of soul,  
Superior still, he wars with fate's control,  
And scarce regrets the fortune he has lost,  
Since it approves the friends he yet can boast ;  
And less emotions in his bosom swell  
To bid that fortune, than these friends, Farewell !”

The price of the tickets was placed at two dollars each, admitting the bearer to all parts of the theatre, and the receipts of the house were upwards of three thousand dollars. It was filled with the beauty and fashion of the city, and the whole affair went off with great *éclat*.

Two days after, Mr. Hamblin sailed for Liverpool, previous to

which, he leased the Bowery Theatre to Mr. Dinneford, then manager of the Franklin Theatre, who commenced re-building it, having formed a joint stock company for that purpose. He reopened it on the first of January, 1837, engaged Cooke's company of equestrians, and produced *Mazeppa*, which had an unprecedented run, twenty thousand dollars having been received at the doors, during the first four weeks of its performance.

Mr. Hamblin, on his arrival in London, played at Covent Garden Theatre, then under the management of Mr. Osbaldiston; he made an arrangement to share the proceeds of each night, after one hundred pounds had been deducted by the management for expenses, but as that amount was never received on any occasion when he played, of course it proved an unprofitable speculation to all parties.

In the latter part of July, he returned to New York, and opened at the Bowery in *Hamlet*, to a house that yielded seven hundred and seventy-seven dollars. He played but four nights, the receipts diminishing to two hundred dollars a night.

The Bowery Theatre was carried on successfully by the assignees of Dinneford (who had failed) until the eighteenth of February following, when the theatre was burnt to the ground.

As an actor, Mr. Hamblin never has risen to any extraordinary eminence. He possesses a good figure when "made up" for the stage, and nature has bountifully lavished on the formation of his head, a symmetry and beauty which she has denied his limbs; his voice is execrable, and with the most strict attention, all he says is not intelligible. His style is evidently founded on that of the great John Philip Kemble, of whom he is a most indifferent imitator.

We would not, however, have the reader infer that he has no merit. There is a dignity and gentlemanly bearing in his mien, that does not desert him, even when off the stage, and his performance of *Hamlet* is certainly equal to that of Wallack, who

has played it to large audiences. His *Macbeth*, too, is far above mediocrity ; still he does not possess any of the attributes of genius, which is characterized for its bold originality, but is content to enact such parts as he has seen represented by true artists. Mr. Hamblin has one great merit ; he is always perfect in his text, the prompter being, as far as concerns him, a useless appendage.

This reminds us of an incident that once occurred in the green-room of Drury Lane. Munden and a number of other celebrated actors, being present, the conversation turned upon Byron's poems, which, at that period, were creating considerable excitement in the literary circles.

"Mr. Munden," said Mrs. Edwin, "have you read '*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* ?'"

"No," said the comedian, "I never read anything but my *parts*, and it would be well if you all followed my example."

As a manager, Mr. Hamblin has been fortunate in having been surrounded by minds happily calculated to assist him in his enterprises, which, in addition to his own unsubdued energy, have rendered his career successful.

Among those connected with him we would class Mr. Thomas Flynn, as almost without an equal for tact, procuring material, and out-of-door management, while Mr. James Anderson,\* or as

\* This gentleman is at present stage-manager of the Bowery Theatre, and is worthy of a more extended notice than we can here devote to him. He was born at Carlow (Ireland), and is a descendant of a highly respectable family of Quakers. He was by trade an upholsterer. His success has not been equal to his merit. Could he be induced to discard a portion of his modesty, take lodgings at a fashionable hotel, drink his champagne, and assume a moiety of the assurance that characterizes others of more pretension and less ability, he would probably receive that remuneration for his services to which his merits entitle him.

He has a farm in Tioga county, where his family reside, who are in possession of every comfort.



he is more generally known, "Irish Jimmy," has manifested more ability in the production of pieces, than any man in this country, or probably in Europe. His mind, which determines, almost by intuition, the excrescences of a new play, enables him to mould and fashion it for the stage, with marvellous judgment and facility, and his power of lopping off the superfluous, and bringing forward the prominent points of a piece, is equally astonishing.

Whatever Mr. Hamblin's merits or demerits may be, either as actor or manager, he has been the means of bringing considerable talent into notice, for which he has been remunerated.

Misfortune, however, seems to have pursued him, but he possesses a recuperative spirit that no common calamity can subdue.

His mind is only equalled by his heart, which is alive to the warmest sympathies. In the words of the Persian proverb, "May he live a thousand years, and his shadow never be less."

## CHAPTER XIV.

Speculations on a Peculiar System of Philosophy—Animal Food, with a few reflections thereon—Mr. Booth at Mobile—Unlooked-for Candidate for a Funeral Service—Engagement at Louisville—Easy Method of procuring a Horse—Two Extraordinary Persons confounded—Booth in “durance vile”—His Escape—Remarkable Adventure with a “Parson.”

THERE is a class of philosophers in the world who, having ruminated, perhaps too deeply, over the wrongs and miseries of their fellows, and having also mused, like Hamlet, o’er

“The whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay,  
The insolence of office,”

and “the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to,” finally regard the whole machinery of civilized life as erroneous. Lost in the bewildering mazes of incessant reflection, by which the judgment is not unfrequently led astray, they sometimes narrow their opinions of the eternal principles of right to such a sublimated degree of exactness, that the lives of the beasts of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, which God and nature intended to minister to the appetite of man, are sacred as those of their own species. To their apprehension, the bird brought down by the shot of the sportsman has been murdered—

the bullock that has been killed for food has been inhumanly and wantonly slaughtered—and the fish which the angler has hooked, has suffered an unnatural martyrdom.

Of this class was the poet Shelley, to whose writings Mr. Booth was especially partial. One of his favorite pastimes was the perusal of "Queen Mab," from which he probably imbibed many of those opinions which the poet himself afterwards recanted.

We can easily comprehend the impression which such a work, with its glowing imagery and nervous poetic diction, would be likely to produce on a mind accustomed to habits of retirement and reflection.

Mr. Booth, after having persuaded himself that it was positive sin to destroy, much more to consume, anything that had life, for a period of three years lived entirely upon vegetable food. Even oysters were sacred from his appetite.

We confess that we are no advocates of the theory, particularly as in our piscatory excursions our hands have been stained with the blood of unnumbered victims, to say nothing of the multitudinous quantity of shell-fish that we have doomed to a "living tomb."

It was a wise provision of nature that man, after a certain age, should die; otherwise, the world would long since have been too "cabin'd and confin'd" to have contained its enormous and ever-augmenting population. Equally just was the arrangement that rendered the meat of the ox and the lamb palatable to the taste and necessary to the animal part of man, thereby delivering the earth of the numerous herds of beasts that would else have wandered over the universe.

We will not, however, attempt to prove the wisdom or absurdity of the theory, being somewhat prejudiced, perhaps, from being accustomed to satisfy the cravings of nature with whatever the gods and the cooks provide.

Mr. Booth, as we have already remarked, lived entirely free

from the use of animal food, regarding the destruction of everything that had life as contrary to the intentions of Providence.

During an engagement at Mobile, he sent for a clergyman to perform the funeral service over a dead body, offering to pay him for his trouble in advance. The minister arrived, and several friends were invited to witness the ceremony.

After the visitors had assembled, the clergyman desired to see the remains, upon which Booth brought them from an adjoining room, and after removing the sheet with which they were covered, a dead pigeon (unplucked) was discovered, over which he insisted the service should be read.

The clergyman, surprised and astonished, declined, remarking to Mr. Booth, that he "did not suppose he would have been guilty of making such an unreasonable and improper request."

"But," said the tragedian, "this is an innocent little creature that never injured any one, that was kind and affectionate to its young, that knew nothing of wrong or injustice, and has been cruelly murdered by some lawless and inhuman wanderer. Why will you not pray for it?"

The clergyman, however, not believing that birds had any further destiny than to perish with the loss of their breath, declined, and Booth was compelled to bury his *protégé* "unanointed and unanel'd, and "with all its imperfections on its head."

From Mobile, he proceeded to Louisville, and opened on the 8th of March, 1835, as usual, in *Richard the Third*, which was succeeded by *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, and various other parts.

At the close of his engagement, he accepted an offer from Mr. Eberly to play at a town a few miles from Louisville, and as pedestrianism was one of his peculiarities, he started on foot, with the intention of walking the distance.

While on his journey, he encountered an officer with a run-



away slave on horseback, whom he was conducting to the town where Booth was to play.

The officer, with his slave, had dismounted at an inn to take breakfast, and left the horse standing at the door, which Booth, after having concluded that riding was much easier than, and preferable to, walking, mounted and rode away. The horse, of course, being afterwards missed, Booth was pursued, overtaken and made prisoner. On being questioned relative to his name, he answered "*Lovett.*"

Lovett was a notorious horse-thief, who had long eluded the officers of justice, and for whose apprehension a reward of five hundred dollars was offered. Previous to his execution (for he has been since arrested and hung), he bequeathed his head to Booth, and it was conveyed to the representative of "*Richard*" by Mr. Rice, the comedian, and the skull still adorns the mantel of one of Mr. Booth's apartments, as a curiosity.

Booth, on answering "*Lovett,*" was immediately rushed upon by several persons, anxious to secure him first, for the purpose of obtaining the reward. He was conducted back to Louisville, where he still gave his name as "*Lovett,*" and was fully committed to jail, which was under the charge of a burly individual by the name of Major Parsons (uncle to the *Parson* Parsons, formerly an actor), not remarkable for his acuteness, and somewhat decrepit from age.

Booth was lodged in the second story, with several individuals of considerably larger dimensions than himself, who assisted him in his mischievous pranks.

It was the custom of Parsons to count his prisoners every morning, before going to market, with great precision, and while going through this operation, he always, during the confinement of Booth, gave the tragedian an indescribable stare of contempt, regarding him as his worst, but most important prisoner, and

looking carefully at his dress in order to identify him in case of accident.

One of the bars of the prison-window had become detached, so that it could be removed without any difficulty, allowing any one of moderate dimensions to get through the aperture.

During the absence of Parsons, who daily went to market, Booth managed to get through the window, and by means of blankets tied together, was lowered to the ground. He at once made his way to the market, where he met Parsons, who immediately recognized him.

"Holloa," said Parsons, "how the devil came you here?"

"I never saw you before," said the tragedian, looking him steadfastly in the face.

"Stay here a moment then," returned Parsons, and away he went, as fast as he could conveniently walk, to the prison. In the meantime, Booth had repaired to the jail and was hoisted to his place of confinement.

Parsons entered to see if "Lovett" was there, and the first individual whom he encountered, was Booth. His hair almost stood erect with wonder and astonishment.

"Why, fellow," said Parsons, "did I not leave you in the market, ten minutes since?"

"I never saw you before," said the tragedian, with his unfaltering gaze, and in his deep and peculiar tone of voice.

Parsons was incredulous, as he hastened back to market, and there stood Junius Brutus, *alias* "Lovett," who had left the jail as before, and arrived first.

"How are you, Parsons?" said Booth. "How is your nephew the parson?"

Parson's cheek began to pale. He thought there was some necromancy or witchcraft in the matter. "Stay but a moment here," said he, "and I'll come back." He wended his way home, almost delirious with excitement and incredulity, where he

found Booth, which almost drove him frantic. The day passed, and nearly every hour, Parsons entered the apartment to see that Lovett was safely secured.

The next morning, Parsons counted his prisoners as usual, eyeing Booth with the most intense scrutiny. The tragedian had a large patch upon his boot, which Parsons noted particularly. Finding his prisoners all safe, he went to market as usual, meditating upon the extraordinary occurrences of the previous day, and there, to his utter amazement and horror, stood Lovett, the identical horse-thief whom he had just left.

"How did you get out?" said Parsons.

"Out of where?" echoed Booth.

"Why, out of jail, where I left you, to be sure."

"Fool," said Booth, "do you wish to insult me; I never saw you before."

"Why, rascal," said Parsons, "I know you by the patch upon your boot."

Parsons's wits began to turn; he could hardly believe his senses. He walked, he ran, until out of breath, to the jail, and there was Lovett, with the patch upon his boot, as before.

Parsons was taken ill and continued so for several days, and Booth resorted to another stratagem, to recover him. He feigned illness and death, and having made an arrangement with a friend, at his lodgings, he was taken from the jail in a coffin, bored with holes (which allowed him to breathe) and conveyed from the jail, which satisfied Parsons that he was effectually rid of "Lovett."

A short time afterwards, the tragedian met Parsons and inquired why he had circulated a report, that he (Booth) was Lovett. Parsons explained the resemblance, and apologized to him for having acted so rudely in market.

## CHAPTER XV.

Booth at the Bowery Theatre—Flynn's benefit—Invitation to Commodore Elliott—Reception of Captain H\*\*\*\* and officers—Ludicrous mistake—Congratulations of the Press—Flynn's birth—His various engagements—Visit to America—*Début* in Boston—Sudden marriage—Appropriate announcement on the play-bills—Engagement with Hamblin—Visit to London—Adventure at Vauxhall Garden—Return to America—Opening of the National Theatre—Its success—The "Maid of Cashmere"—New Bowery Theatre—New Chatham Theatre—Flynn in a new character—Mr. Flynn's talents as an actor—His managerial exertions.

AFTER the occurrences detailed in the preceding chapter, Mr. Booth returned to his farm. In the month of August, 1836, he visited New York, and performed an engagement at the Bowery Theatre, with his usual success.

He engaged to play for Flynn's benefit, but returned to his home, without tendering him the promised aid.

Mr. Flynn, who was always alive to his own interest, as well as to that of the establishment with which he was connected, resolved, as usual, to have some novel attraction on the occasion, and the frigate *Constitution* having just arrived with our Minister to France, Mr. Livingston, Flynn went on board, and invited Commodore Elliott and his officers to attend the theatre on the night of his benefit.

The Commodore acknowledged the compliment, and urged, as an excuse, that it would be difficult for him to be present,



having already accepted an invitation to dine with Mr. Livingston, but promised notwithstanding, to visit the theatre if his engagement would permit. He, however, advised Flynn to go into the "Mess-Room," and extend the invitation to Lieutenant Montgomery and officers, not omitting to mention the fact that the Commodore would be present.

Flynn followed his suggestion, and on the evening appointed, all the officers arrived and were conducted into the private office of the theatre, where a cold collation, with the usual accompaniments, awaited them.

Flynn, well aware that the Commodore would not be present, induced the officers to tarry at the table considerably longer than they otherwise would have done, under the pretence of waiting his arrival. Having taken a rapid survey of their uniforms, he concluded that Captain H\*\*\*\*, of the Marine Corps, bore a stronger resemblance to the Commodore than any one else present, as he wore an epaulet on each shoulder.

The reader is probably aware of the fact, that in foreign ports, the officers in the marine service are dressed with more regard to style and personal appearance than those attached to the navy.

Flynn, having announced to his guests that Commodore Elliot had sent him information that it would be impossible for him to attend, ushered his company, led by himself (arm-in-arm with Capt. H\*\*\*\*), to the box appropriated to the officers.

Upon the arrival of Flynn and his companion, the audience rose, and cheer upon cheer attended the entrance of Captain H\*\*\*\*.

"For the love of heaven, Mr. Flynn," exclaimed the Captain, "explain to the audience that I am not Commodore Elliott, for whom they evidently take me."

"Put your hand on your heart," said Flynn, "as a token of acknowledgment, and I'll afterwards explain the matter from the

stage." The audience, in the meantime, being reminded of Commodore Elliott's connection with the affair of the figure head of Jackson, which was sawed from the bow of the Constitution, and with which the reader is probably familiar, applauded vociferously.

Following the injunctions of Flynn, accompanied by a gracious inclination of the head, poor H\*\*\*\* was greeted with a burst of almost deafening applause, and compelled to remain through the performance, the "observed of all observers," and the subject of speculation and remark.

The ensuing day, the press noticed the performance, and publicly congratulated the Commodore on his excellent health and personal appearance, much to the delight of the officers, who seemed to relish the joke exceedingly.

As we have, of necessity, been compelled to associate the name of Flynn with that of Booth in this work, he having been his "counsel's consistory," and as he is also identified with the dramatic history of the country, it may not be inappropriate to give the reader a short sketch of his career.

Mr. Thomas Flynn was born on the twenty-second of December, 1804, and made his *début* in London, at the Surrey Theatre, in March, 1822, as the pupil of the late Mr. Bengough, of Drury Lane (father of the celebrated *artiste* of the Olympic Theatre, New York), and proprietor and manager of the Cobourg Theatre, in the character of *Florian* in the "Foundling of the Forest," and made an extraordinary impression for a first appearance.

He afterwards performed at Newmarket as leading tragedian, playing *Hamlet* with very good success, so good indeed, that Mr. Decamp, manager of the Newcastle Theatre, engaged him for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Chester, Shrewsbury and Sheffield, and he opened in Newcastle, in the character of *Rob Roy*, to Miss

Stevens's (now the Countess of Essex) *Diana Vernon*, and as *Count Almaviva* in the "Marriage of Figaro."

It was at this period he discovered that he had mistaken his *forte*, and, therefore, abandoned tragedy\* for light comedy.

In the year 1824, Mr. Flynn quitted Mr. Decamp's company, and joined that of Mr. Thomas Trotter, at Worthing, where he played the leading parts in comedy so successfully, that Mr. Jerry Sneak Russell offered him a liberal engagement to play at the Brighton Theatre, where he opened as *Corinthian Tom*, in "Tom and Jerry," and *Iago* in Shakspeare's "Othello."

Here he performed until the close of the season, a portion of the time, playing with Miss Foote (now the Countess of Harrington), upon whom he made so favorable an impression, that she obtained for him an engagement at the Bristol Theatre, then under the management of the father of Mr. Macready, with whom he remained (sustaining the leading characters in tragedy and comedy), in the capacity of stage manager, until the latter part of 1826, when he was engaged by Elliston for Drury Lane; but that gentleman having suddenly withdrawn from the establishment, to assume the management of the Surrey Theatre, he followed him thither, and opened as *Florville* in the "Dramatist," and *Humphrey Grizzle* in the "Three Singles," Elliston playing *Vapid* in the first piece, and the *Singles* in the latter. He continued at the Surrey until Mr. Finn arrived in England, who

\* It is rather a curious fact that the majority of comedians cannot divest themselves of the idea that they are by nature fitted to shine in the department of tragedy. As an illustration of this, we need but refer to the celebrated Foote, who made his *début* in *Othello* and failed; Liston, who attempted *Octavian*; Quick, who undertook *Richard the Third*, and was ridiculed; Munden, who, in the early part of his career, discovered "that tragedy was not his *forte*;" Downton, who commenced as a tragedian; Jack Reeve, who once played *Othello*; Finn, who has enacted *Jaffier*, and "last not least," Hackett, who butchered *King Lear* and *Hamlet* in cold blood.



engaged him to play at the Federal Street Theatre, in Boston, at nine pounds sterling per week.

He left London in August, for America, and opened in Boston on the tenth of September, as *Captain Absolute* in the "Rivals," Finn, Kilner, Duff, Barnes, Andrews, King, Mrs. Barnes, Miss Rock and Mrs. Young, playing in the same piece.

After an engagement of four months, which closed with "Romeo and Juliet," Mr. Flynn enacting *Romeo*, and Mrs. Sloman *Juliet*, he next appeared at the old Chatham Theatre, under the management of Mr. Maywood, as *Rover* in the comedy of "Wild Oats," a character which won for him general admiration.

Here he fell desperately in love with Miss Twibill, whom he married, against the wishes of her friends and admirers, at a very short notice, having proposed to the lady at *six* o'clock in the evening, and married her at *seven*.

As the affair created considerable excitement, the manager shortly after announced "*The Way to Get Married*," with Flynn as *Tangent*, and Mrs. Flynn as *Julia*, to be followed by "*A Day after the Wedding*," with Flynn as *Col. Freelove*, and Mrs. Flynn as *Lady Elizabeth*.

At the close of his engagement at the Chatham he left New York, and visited Charleston, Savannah and Augusta, and returned to New York; whence he went to Baltimore in the year 1831, and joined Booth in the management of the Holliday Street Theatre.

He next became manager of the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, where he remained until 1832, when he entered into an engagement with Hamblin, at the Bowery. Through his exertions, the "Last Days of Pompeii" was produced, which met with the most extraordinary success, and "Norman Leslie" and the Jewess, which were equally attractive.



In the year 1836, he embarked for England for the purpose of contracting engagements with actors and *artistes* for the National Theatre, New York, which he had previously hired.

During Flynn's sojourn in London, he visited Vauxhall Garden one evening, to witness the performance of the "Ravel family," in company with Mr. "Jim Crow" Rice, and several other Americans.

Flynn, who bears a strong resemblance to Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence (son of William the Fourth), was generally mistaken for that gentleman, light hair, small eyes, rubicund face, and considerable *embonpoint* being characteristics of both personages.

There is one peculiarity in their characters, however, which is essentially different, Lord Adolphus being celebrated for his penuriousness, and the *ci-devant* manager for his liberality, which was the means of rectifying the error.

Lord Adolphus, or, as he is generally called, "Lord Dolly," is a constant visitor at Drury Lane Theatre, his mother being the celebrated Mrs. Jordan, of dramatic notoriety. He is said to have an extraordinary *penchant* for conversation, every third sentence ending with "*the late King, my Father.*"

During the evening, the party sat down to supper, the King's band, the while, playing for their entertainment, and the company manifesting as much respect and attention to Flynn, as if he had been "Lord Dolly" himself.

"My Lord, shall I help you to a glass of wine?" said one.

"Lord Fitzclarence, allow me to propose your health," said a second.

"Have you any objection, my Lord," said Rice, "to allow your father's band to play *Yankee Doodle*?"

"Certainly not," said Flynn, who, beckoning to the leader, in an authoritative tone said, "*Play Yankee Doodle!*"

"Certainly, my Lord," and the band immediately struck up the desired tune.

The Americans becoming rather excited and enthusiastic at the sound of their national air, Rice, mounting the table, shouted, "Is there another such a tune as that, and if so, where is it?"

Flynn, becoming alarmed at the conduct of his friends, suddenly threw a sovereign at the band and made his exit, when every one doubted the reality of his lordship, as "Lord Dolly" had never been suspected of a generous act, being mean to a degree.

Flynn returned to America, in company with Mitchell, James Wallack and Son, Plumer, Charles Howard, the Ravel Family, Morley (the vocalist), Edwin and Bengough, whose services he secured for the National Theatre, which he opened on the twenty-ninth of August with the "Merchant of Venice" (Booth playing *Shylock*), and the "Man with the Carpet Bag," in which Mr. Mitchell made his *début* in America, and at once established himself in public favor.

The first night's receipts were sixteen hundred and fifty-two dollars, and Booth played eight nights, to houses almost equally as crowded.

The National Theatre, under Flynn's management, was eminently successful, the receipts for twenty-five weeks being ninety-five thousand dollars. It was here the "Maid of Cashmere" was produced, under the direction of Celeste; the first week's receipts amounted to the enormous sum of seventy-seven hundred and fifty-one dollars, being the largest sum ever taken in one week in New York, at the same prices of admission.

Flynn's lease of the National having expired at the end of the year, the building was sold to Hackett and Mauran; the former opened it, and lost several thousand dollars in a very short period.

In the meantime, the Bowery Theatre, which had been burnt

down, was re-built by Dinneford, and Flynn became stage manager, but in 1838, it was again destroyed by fire, when Flynn embarked with Booth on a professional tour for the South.

After his return, in conjunction with H. E. Willard, he built the Chatham Theatre and opened it in September, in the same year, where he remained until theatricals became in such a depressed condition, that he retired from the concern, and appeared as a disciple of Father Matthew, in the Temperance cause.

As an actor, Mr. Flynn has exhibited the possession of considerable talent, particularly as a comedian. His success in comedy, in our opinion, has been chiefly owing to a natural exuberance of animal spirits which never deserts him, either on or off the stage. With an apparent contempt for the text of his author, he has the faculty of rendering every part he assumes excessively ludicrous, and with a consciousness that his audience will relish whatever he attempts, he almost *creates* the character he plays, depending upon his own resources to carry him successfully through.

We must confess, however, that he appears to better advantage off the stage, and excites more mirth in his unrehearsed *conversations*. His memory, which is remarkably retentive, his quick observation and sense of the ridiculous, and his powers of imitation, which are extraordinary, combined, render him an agreeable companion.

Naturally of a sanguine temperament, and with a boundless acquaintance, it is hardly a matter of surprise that his oblations at the shrine of Bacchus should have been carried to an extent beyond that which prudence and propriety would have dictated. His natural good sense, however, in a happy moment, triumphed over an inordinate passion, and he at once reinstated himself in the good opinion of those whose friendship is worth retaining, and (what is of more value) in his own self respect.

As a manager, he certainly has no superior, as those who know

anything of his career are aware. Wherever his exertions have been directed success has crowned his efforts, and whenever he makes his appearance again, before the curtain, as *manager*, the audience may confidently expect that there is some extraordinary attraction behind it.



## CHAPTER XVI.

Booth's visit to England—His engagement at Drury Lane—Disregard of the wishes of the audience—Sudden return to America—Visit to various places—Announcement to play "Richard" at the Bowery—Destruction of the Theatre—Graphic account of the fire—"Benefit for the sufferers"—Announcement of Booth, as Shylock—Sudden disappearance—Booth in a new character—Engagement at the National Theatre—Departure for the South—Unrehearsed performance on board the "Neptune"—Attempt to commit suicide—Philosophical request to Flynn—Appearance at the Charleston Theatre—Booth's attack on Flynn—A valuable "bridge" broken—Lamentable result—Obstacles to the success of the Drama in America—Exorbitant demands of actors—The "Starring" System noticed—"London Assurance" and "Fashion"—Engagement of Booth at the Park—Booth "at Court"—Charles Kean's engagement—Occasional reflections.

AFTER Booth's engagement at the National Theatre, he visited Philadelphia and Baltimore, and in the month of November, 1836, sailed from the former place for Europe.

He was engaged by Mr. Bunn, who was at that period lessee of the establishment, to appear at Drury Lane Theatre for three nights, at one hundred pounds a night, and opened in his favorite character of *Richard the Third*.

At the close of the performance, on the first evening, he was loudly called for by the audience, but having always entertained a repugnance to answering a summons of this nature, and considering the custom "one more honored in the breach, than the observance," he gave it no attention.

Mr. Cooper, who was then stage manager, went to the dressing-room of Booth and offered to conduct him before the audience.

"Oh! certainly, Mr. Cooper, I'll go with you now," said the tragedian, and together they walked to the stage door.

Cooper, who *en passant*, was near sighted, having paused for a moment to adjust his hair and cravat, before entering on the stage, said, "Now, Mr. Booth, I'm ready," and turning round, to his surprise found his companion had vanished. He returned to the dressing-room, but no Mr. Booth could be seen. "Richard" had disappeared, having thrown his cloak over his shoulders, and left the audience shouting for "Booth!"

On the second night, he played *Iago* to Forrest's *Othello*, and on the third, repeated *Richard*.

From Drury Lane he proceeded to the Surrey and other Theatres in the vicinity of London.

Finding theatricals at a very low ebb, he took passage on board the ship Ontario, and on the 2d of July, Mr. Thomas Flynn received from him a communication, in which he proposed to play on the 4th of the same month, for two hundred dollars. Flynn accepted his offer, and he appeared accordingly, at the Bowery Theatre, after which it closed, being the last night of the season.

His next appearance was at Boston; thence, he went to New Orleans, and afterwards returned to Philadelphia, where he played his usual round of characters, at the Walnut Street Theatre.

In February, 1838, Mr. Flynn was appointed by the assignees of Mr. William Dinneford, Manager of the Bowery Theatre, for which he was to have a moiety of the interest in the establishment, after the liquidation of Dinneford's debts.

On the 11th of the same month, Mr. Dinneford was despatched by the manager to Philadelphia, to engage Mr. Booth for the 18th, being the Monday following, to open as *Richard the Third*,

which was accordingly announced, to be followed by "Tom and Jerry," the lamented Finn to appear as *Bob Logic*.

After the performance on the Saturday evening previous, on seeing the watchmen placed in their accustomed position, Mr. Flynn returned to his residence in Mott-street, accompanied by Mr. Finn, the comedian, Mr. Snowden, Mr. Freeman, and Mr. Bunn, the Treasurer of the Theatre.

They had not left the house more than a quarter of an hour, when the watchman knocked at Flynn's door and proclaimed that the theatre was in flames.

From a graphic account of the fire in one of the daily papers we extract the following:—

At the end of Broadway, in Fourteenth-street, the light reflected by the snow shone so strongly that you could see to pick up a pin. Of the thousand and one souls who started from their beds and stared out of their windows, all thought that the fire was in the next street, or in the next block, so intense were the flames, and so lurid and vivid was the light, aided by the reflection from the snow on the roofs, and in the streets.

Poor Tom Flynn stood in the street, looking like "patience on a monument, smiling at grief," or at the great conflagration. Tom had a splendid collection of manuscripts in the building. He was the last man in the house, except the private watchmen, and when he was leaving, there was no trace of any other sparks on the premises except himself. As the fire progressed, every now and then, away would go a bundle of burnt papers, hurled through the air.

"There goes one of my invaluable manuscripts," says Tom, "there go two hundred and eighty-four dollars!"

"Never mind, Tom," says our friend Finn, who was standing close by, "it's only the destruction of *paper currency*—and you are anxious for a return to specie payments!"

"The Lord be praised," said a pious puritan, close to our side, "this house of iniquity—this ante-chamber to hell will never be re-built again! The fire is the special work of Providence! Providence had a hand in this!"

"Then Providence ought to be arrested for arson," said a rowdy in reply.

"Profane Philistine," replied the pattern of piety—"thou art not acquainted with Providence."

"No, nor I don't want to know him, if he sets fire to folks' houses."

"I tell thee, young man, that this will never be rebuilt."

"Oh, yes it will, in six months!"

"God d—n you, I tell you it won't," said the pattern of piety, forgetting, in his zeal, that he was becoming impious.

"There goes Don Juan," said Flynn, as another folio manuscript flew into the air.

"He burns well," said Finn, "but I thought he had been consigned to the flames long since."

"There goes 'Breakers Ahead,'" said Flynn.

"Yes, and here come breakers behind," said Finn, as some firemen broke through the crowd with an engine.

\* \* \* \* \*

Booth arrived at the theatre, which was to be re-opened at reduced prices for the first time on Monday evening, and to his astonishment, found the building in ruins.

Shortly after this event, an entertainment was "got up" at the Park Theatre, for the benefit of the sufferers by the burning of the Bowery. The "Merchant of Venice" was announced, with Booth as *Shylock*, and Mrs. Flynn as *Portia*, to be followed by the farce of "The Young Widow," Mr. Gates playing *Splash*. A large audience assembled, and Mr. Booth, after having dressed himself in the costume of *Shylock*, disappeared just as the curtain was about to rise. Mr. Clarke, one of the stock actors, was substi-



tuted, and played the part with much satisfaction to the audience, he being one of the best readers on the stage. Flynn went in pursuit of Booth, and discovered him at a fire in William, near Wall street, habited in his *Shylock* apparel, and laboring at an engine, in the endeavor, as he said, to "save people's property from destruction."

Flynn took him in charge, and afterwards contracted an engagement with Wallack, for Booth and himself to play in conjunction, six nights, at a hundred dollars a night.

At the termination of this engagement at the National Theatre, they both embarked on board the steamer Neptune, Capt. Penoyer, for the south, on a professional tour. Soon after they left the wharf, a sailor was brought on board the vessel much intoxicated. Booth, who had been indulging rather freely with the "jolly god," was roaming about the deck half crazy, demanding to know where his bank stock and family were, confounding both with quotations from Shakspeare and Massinger.

"Sir," said he to one of the passengers,—

"Put me in good security,  
And suddenly, by mortgage or by statute,  
Or some of your new possessions, or I'll have you  
Dragg'd in your lavender robes to the gaol; you know me,  
And therefore do not trifle ;"

and turning around,

"I have set my life upon a cast,  
And I will stand the hazard of the die."

He committed various other extravagances, to the terror of the captain and passengers.

After they had been at sea a few days, Booth went to Flynn with an air of profound mystery, and observed, "Flynn, when we

reach the spot where poor Conway perished, tell me, as I've a message for him."

Conway was a tragedian of great ability, who committed suicide, by throwing himself into the sea, and of whom we shall speak anon.

"I'll go below," said Booth, "and try to sleep. Tom, don't forget to call me when we reach the spot, for I've a message for Conway, and long to have a chat with him."

Of course Flynn did not disturb his slumbers, but when the steamer reached the bar off Charleston harbor, up came Booth, exclaiming, "I'm just going to see Conway," and jumped overboard. The sea was running very high, but the boat was lowered, and with much difficulty Booth was rescued from a watery grave.

After he had been secured in the boat, his first words were, "I say, Tom, look out ; you're a heavy man ; be steady, for if the boat should upset, we'll all be *drowned*."

They arrived in Charleston and opened at the New Theatre, being its first season, under the management of Latham and Abbott, in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," to a crowded house, Booth playing *Sir Giles Overreach*, and Flynn *Marrall*. Booth was announced to play *Richard* on the following evening, but after the performance of the first night was over, he went with Flynn to Truesdale's saloon, took an oyster-supper, and they both returned to their lodgings at the "Planters' Hotel."

About two o'clock in the morning, Booth found his way to Flynn's room, which was on the ground floor, got through the window, went to the chimney-place, armed himself with a cast-iron fire-dog, and inflicted a severe wound on Flynn's temple, over his right eye. Flynn sprang from his bed, and discovered the tragedian in the act of aiming a second blow, which, in endeavoring to avoid, he received over his left eye. Finding that he had to deal with a madman, Flynn escaped from the room, Mr.

Booth in close pursuit, and endeavoring to strike him. They finally grappled and fell, the herculean strength of Booth while under the excitement of temporary derangement, giving him the advantage.

In the *mêlée*, Mr. Booth received a blow upon the face, which resulted in disfiguring his countenance, by breaking the bridge\* of his nose.

With this event may be said to have terminated the theatrical career of Booth, which we have thus far endeavored continuously to follow; although still often manifesting a portion of the fire and energy of his youthful days, yet his face, which previous to this catastrophe, he could vary to every form of expression, by it became despoiled, and his voice assumed a nasal sound, to which it was before a stranger.

Since that period, he has played at various places in the Union, but we shall content ourselves with noticing but one other engagement, in 1844, at which time the drama was in a most depressed condition, owing to a variety of circumstances.

One of the greatest obstacles to its success in this country, is the absurd and ruinous system of "*starring*," which serves to benefit a few, to the detriment of the many.

An actor of any celebrity, instead of performing for a season for a fair equivalent for his services, and ending his engagement with a benefit, as is the practice generally in Europe, demands an exorbitant sum for each performance, during a period of six nights, closing with a benefit on the seventh, and custom having sanctioned the usage, managers are compelled to accede to the arrangement.

Thus Mr. Macready, or Mr. C. Kean often realizes as much

\* This reminds us of an observation once made by one of Booth's admirers. "I like Booth very well," said he, "but I could never get over that nose." "No wonder," replied a wag, "the *bridge* is broken."



for the labor of six nights, as Mr. Placide obtains for playing during the entire year, and yet in his particular line of characters, he exhibits as much ability and more genius than either, in their several departments of acting.

In addition to the injustice of the system, there is another evil that results from it ; the greater portion of the profits arising from theatres is appropriated to the *star*, and consequently, as the salaries of the stock actors are necessarily inconsiderable, they are generally of inferior abilities, men of sterling talent preferring some other employment to that which requires such immense labor, and produces hardly sufficient to afford them a livelihood.

Instead, therefore, of having a company of actors who are capable of doing justice to their several parts, we have one or two characters properly represented, and the others, not only badly executed, but rendered still more unsatisfactory, by the contrast.

Were managers but aware of the fact, they would find it much more to their interest and to that of the public, to abandon the system of *starring* entirely ; by this means a full company of *artistes* could be formed, that would nightly afford an intellectual entertainment and attract large audiences.

A portion of the immense sums now paid to *stars*, applied to appropriate scenery and costumes, and to the production of sterling plays on a liberal scale in an attractive form, would materially aid the cause of the drama.

The extraordinary success which attended the meagre play of "London Assurance," and the still more indifferent one of "Fashion,"\* owing to the manner in which they were put upon the stage, is a sufficient proof of what the result would be.

\* This piece, which cannot with propriety be called a *comedy*, being but a re-production of Joe Miller's jests, and entirely destitute of every principle of dramatic composition, had a very successful run at the Park Theatre, owing to the splendor of the scenery and appropriateness of the fixtures.



As we before remarked, the season of 1844 was a gloomy one for theatricals in this country, the playhouse being almost entirely deserted.

Booth had contracted an engagement with the manager of the Park Theatre, to play six nights in the month of June, at fifty dollars per night, and according to agreement, went from his place of residence in Baltimore, and played on five occasions, but on the evening of the sixth, the manager believing him incapacitated from performing by an over indulgence in liquor, had a notice placed in front of the box office, stating there would be no performance that night.

A suit was instituted by the manager, in the Court of Common Pleas. From the evidence, it appeared that Booth was sober on the night in question, and at the door in time to perform. The jury, without leaving their seats, gave a verdict for the defendant, and the manager was compelled to pay the costs.

It also appeared on the trial, that the average expenses of the theatre were about two hundred and fifty dollars per night, and the average receipts, about the same amount, during Mr. Booth's engagement.

Had the manager devoted the same care and expense to getting up the pieces, that were lavished on *Richard the Third*, during Charles Kean's engagement the following season, he would have found a different result.

Mr. Kean's engagement of sixteen nights, when he appeared successively as Richard, yielded upwards of sixteen thousand dollars, when, as every one knows who visits the theatre, the audiences were attracted by the splendor of the scenery and costumes, Mr. Kean being altogether incompetent, mentally and physically, to do justice to the character.

while the fine old comedies of Sheridan and Goldsmith, produced on the same boards, in the ordinary manner, failed to draw enough people together to pay the expenses.

What Mr. Booth's success would have been, with the same advantages, although in the decline of life and but a shadow of what he once was, we leave those to determine who have witnessed his triumphs in Richard, in smaller theatres, and supported by the most indifferent actors.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Birth of Conway—His first appearance as an actor—Engagement at the provincial theatres—*Début* in Dublin—Incident at the Dublin Theatre—First appearance in London—His reception—Banishment from the metropolitan stage—Benefit at Bath—Hindrances to success in London—His depression of mind—Departure for America—*Début* in New York—Opinions of the Press—Cooper and Conway in the same plays—Their success—Retirement of the latter from the stage—His eccentric habits—Departure for Charleston—His suicide—Reflections thereon.

IN the preceding chapter, we promised to record something relative to Mr. William Augustus Conway.

This splendid actor (for such he certainly was, if we may credit the opinions of those who saw him) was born in Henrietta street, Cavendish Square, London, in the year 1789, and received his education in the Island of Barbadoes, to which place he was sent at an early period of his life. He returned at the age of eighteen, and having imbibed a love of the histrionic art from witnessing a theatrical performance, made his first appearance at Chester, as *Zanga* in the "Revenge." His success was so complete, that the manager, Mr. Macready (father of the tragedian), offered him a year's engagement, and he continued playing at Chester, Manchester, Sheffield, Leicester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Birmingham, until his increased and augmenting reputation induced Mr. Jones, of the Dublin Theatre, to offer

him the situation made vacant by the departure of Mr. Holman for America.

He made his *début* in Dublin, in 1812, and commanded a large share of public approbation. This fact of itself is a sufficient evidence of his ability as an actor, the fiat of a Dublin audience being regarded as an umpire from which there is no appeal.

It was here also, that Miss O'Neill, a short time previous, introduced her splendid talents to the public attention, and in conjunction with Conway, met with the most extraordinary success.

During their performance of "Romeo and Juliet," on the occasion of Miss O'Neill's first representation of the latter character in Dublin, a ludicrous circumstance occurred. The balcony, in the garden scene, was particularly low, and Conway, who was remarkably tall, in delivering the lines :—

" Oh ! that I were a glove upon that hand,  
That I might touch that cheek ;"

laid his hand upon the balcony. A fellow in the gallery immediately roared out, "Get out wid your blarney ; why don't you touch her, then, and not be praching Parson Saxe there ?"

After having won the unqualified approbation of the Irish audiences, he left Dublin, and played successfully at Liverpool and Birmingham.

Being of extraordinary stature, well proportioned, and eminently handsome, a critic in speaking of his first appearance at Birmingham, remarked, that "he opened in *Othello* to hide his rising beauty from the sun."

On the fourth of October, 1814, he made his first appearance in London, at Covent Garden Theatre, as *Alexander the Great*, and was received with the most distinguished approbation. His majestic port and graceful form were of great advantage in his



representation of the warlike and triumphant monarch, and on the night of his *début*, he at once established himself in the good opinion of his audience. He afterwards played *Othello*, *Jaffier*, *Coriolanus*, and a variety of parts in the higher walks of tragedy. In genteel comedy, too, he acquired an enviable reputation.

Miss O'Neill, also, made her first appearance before the same audience, in *Juliet*, Conway playing *Romeo*. She afterwards appeared as *Belvidera* and *Monimia*, Conway personating *Jaffier* and *Polydore*. Their success was extraordinary at first, and that of the lady continued to be so; but Conway, who was of an excessively nervous temperament, from various causes, among which was the wanton maliciousness of several hirelings of the press, retired from the metropolitan stage.

In a criticism published in a theatrical work, issued in London in 1820, we meet with the following:—

“Mr. Conway’s benefit on Saturday (at the Bath Theatre) was patronized by as splendid an audience, both in point of numbers and fashion, as ever graced the theatre. Driven from the London boards by a profligate exercise of pernicious power, this gentleman may be adduced as a lamentable proof of the cruelty and injustice to which criticism can be taught to extend. I know enough of Mr. Conway to aver, that his ambition has been rather bent upon the pursuit of excellence than the possession of applause; and though sacrificed to a greedy and abominable Moloch, that his banishment from the metropolis has not induced him to relax his assiduity, or relinquish his research. I do not think it probable that Mr. Conway will again expose himself to the infamous scurrility by which he has been already assailed, but should his pretension re-appeal to the scrutiny of a London audience, rely upon it that neither Hunt nor Hazlitt will succeed in a renewal of their coarse and cowardly invective.”

It was at this period that the Kembles were in the meridian of their fame, and as they almost monopolized the attention of the patrons of the drama, they proved a formidable obstacle to his success.

In addition to this, a ferocious vagabond by the name of *Hooke*, who, at that period, was the dramatic executioner of a paper called the "John Bull," attacked him with all the virulence of which his knavish disposition was susceptible.

The extraordinary height of Conway opened a fine field for the satirical powers of Hooke, and to the malice of this hireling of the press, as much as to any other cause, may be attributed the loss of spirit and confidence which Conway experienced, and that depression of mind which broke his heart, and resulted in his death.

It is an old saying, and time and experience have verified its truth, that "misfortunes never come singly." Conway, who was nervous and sensitive to the last degree, contracted an unfortunate attachment to Miss O'Neill, which, not being reciprocated, filled up the measure of his despair.

He became the victim of a misanthropical affection—a species of *monomania*, that induced some of the most absurd and incongruous conclusions. Believing that there was a systematic determination among the celebrated actors of his time, to *crush* him, he abandoned the stage, where he was in the receipt of twenty and thirty pounds per week, and acted in the capacity of prompter, for as many shillings.

In the latter part of 1823, he sailed for America, and on the twelfth of January, 1824, opened in New York, at the Park Theatre, as *Hamlet*, and met with a reception quite as enthusiastic as was lavished on Cooke and Kean, when they first appeared.

After enacting *Coriolanus*, *Bertram*, *Lord Townley* ("Provoked

Husband"), *Hamet* ("Conquest of Taranto"), and *Romeo*, he appeared as *Beverly* in the "Gamester," and *Petruchio* in the "Taming of the Shrew," for his benefit, to a large and fashionable audience, *Miss Beverly* and *Katharine* being represented by Miss Johnson.\* The house, on this occasion, yielded him sixteen hundred dollars, and the performance went off with great *éclat*.

Among the notices of the event that were elicited from the press, we select the following :—

"In the haughty and scornful *Coriolanus*, 'walking with proud patrician steps the streets of Rome;' in the melancholy and fitful *Hamlet*; the misanthropical *Bertram*; and the ardent lover of the fair *Capulet*, he has acquitted himself in a masterly manner, and retired amidst the most cheering applause. Both as an actor and a gentleman, Mr. Conway is entitled to the respect of all the friends and patrons of the drama."

Immediately after this engagement, Mr. Cooper, who was then a great favorite with the New Yorkers, appeared, and an arrangement being made with the two actors to play in conjunction, they opened in February, in "*Venice Preserved*," Cooper playing *Pierre*, and Conway, *Jaffier*.

We extract the following notice of their performance from one of the papers of the ensuing day :—

"Last evening these gentlemen appeared before a thronged house, Conway in *Jaffier*, and Cooper in *Pierre*. Both of these characters are admirably suited for the display of tragic genius, and

\* This lady afterwards became the wife of Mr. Thomas Hilson, one of the finest comedians that ever graced the stage. After his death, she was indebted to the generosity of Mr. Edmund Simpson, for comfort and consolation in her widowed life, who, having been a warm friend of her husband, gave her a home at his house, where she died.



in both it was admirably exhibited. In the first interview, the peculiar character of each was finely developed. The gallant bearing and sarcastic indignation of Cooper ; his tone of bitter irony when he speaks of the Senate ; the art with which he stirs up the spirit of Jaffier, at once gave a stamp of truth and energy to the part. The dejected demeanor of Conway at first ; the desperate resignation to his unhappy destiny ; the hurried and eager play of his features and attitude of sudden resolution when Pierre excites him to vengeance ; the tenderness with which he soon after folds Belvidera to his broken heart ; the wasting denunciation he pours forth against her inexorable father, were all executed in the style of a master.

“Cooper threw out his greatest fire in the scene where he defends the honor of his friend. There was a majestic daring in his carriage, a dauntlessness in his glance and in the swell of his whole figure, that might have made the conspirators quail. The noble confidence with which he vouched for Jaffier’s honor was perhaps surpassed by his agony of surprise when he afterwards learns that his friend has indeed betrayed him. In the subsequent interview, both sustained their respective characters to perfection.

“It is a long while since our theatre presented such splendid attractions as it received from the combined talents of Conway and Cooper ; and we cannot omit saying, that our gratification with their respective performances was enhanced by observing the cordiality with which they seconded each other ; it was as honorable to their liberality of feeling, as their reputation is to their talents.”

This was succeeded by “Othello,” Conway playing “*The Moor*,” and Cooper *Iago* ; “King Lear,” with Cooper as the monarch, and Conway as *Edgar* ; the “Fair Penitent,” with



Conway as *Horatio*, and Cooper as *Lothario*. The house was nightly crowded, and they played together with great success.

During the engagement, in addition to the characters before enumerated, they appeared in conjunction in "King John," the "School for Scandal," "Julius Cæsar," and the "Orphan."

From New York, Mr. Conway proceeded to Boston, where he played with equal success.

During the following month, Cooper and Conway were re-engaged in New York, at the Park Theatre, where Conway played the various parts that Cooper had enacted, and the latter gentleman assumed those that his brother player had previously performed.

It was about this period, that Mr. Macready was expected in this country, and his anticipated appearance proved a powerful source of anxiety to Mr. Conway, who experienced the most sad foreboding on the consummation of that event, confidently believing that Mr. Macready was visiting the country for the "purpose of crushing him."

His nervous system having become excessively deranged, he bade a final adieu to the stage, and abandoned himself to all the imaginary terrors that his *monomania* inspired. He became negligent in his habits and appearance, and might often be seen (for it was his "usual custom in the afternoon") riding up the Bowery, in a dilapidated vehicle, which might *once* have been called a wagon, drawn by a white horse, who seemed as reckless and careworn as his master. His own dress was in keeping with the establishment, having fallen into the "sere and yellow leaf."

His mind, which had become deranged from its natural course, finally fastened on the subject of religion, and he devoted himself with great assiduity to the ministry. After preaching several beautiful discourses, he left New York for Charleston.

During the voyage, he manifested a great depression of mind,

and when the vessel had arrived at the bar of Charleston, he was seen in the cabin, making a memorandum (which was afterwards found to be addressed to his mother) in the blank leaf of his bible, when suddenly he went on deck, a splash in the water was heard, and poor Conway was seen no more.

The religious fanatic who consigns to eternal torture the victims of suicide, knows little of the human heart. Instead of exciting surprise at the occurrence of such events, it is to us a matter of astonishment that so many have courage to live on, in hopeless, irremediable misery. The tortures of the body, though often keen enough, are nothing compared to the agonies of mind endured by hearts stung with disappointment, or lacerated by neglect.

Mr. Conway had "won golden opinions from all sorts of people;" he had every apparent means of enjoyment at his command, but like the waveless and mirrored stream, that seems so placid and motionless on its surface, while a resistless current is running below, and the whitened bones of the shipwrecked voyagers are mouldering at its bottom, even thus, beneath the calmness and serenity of his countenance, the tide of crushed hope and despair were coursing through his heart.

As an actor, he is said to have possessed but very little genius, but the most extraordinary talent; like Mr. Macready, manifesting a great degree of artistical finish, but exhibiting none of those brilliant and startling evidences of originality, which have rendered Kean and Booth so famous.

When off the stage, he was unobtrusive and reserved in his demeanor, but generally esteemed by those who knew him. In the words of the poet :—

"The recollection of his worth will be  
A fadeless halo round his memory."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

A Glance at the Olympic Theatre—Its Presiding Deity—Mr. Mitchell's Early Days—His First Theatrical Aspirations—Their Effect—First Appearance on the Stage—Engagement in London—Critiques on his Performance of Jem Bags—Anecdote of Mitchell and Jerrold—Mitchell in Raggs—Embarcation for America—Olympic—Opening Address—His Musical Taste, &c.

IN mentioning the arrival of Mr. Mitchell in this country, in a previous chapter, we intended to have gathered material sufficient for a biographical sketch ; as it is, however, we can only bestow a glance at the "Olympic Manager."

In what was once the upper, but is now the central part of Broadway, stands a neat and showy building. There is a balcony in front, and red curtains hanging gracefully at the various windows. A conspicuous sign with the words, "Olympic Theatre," announces to the stranger the purpose of the building ; the denizens of Gotham require no such aid ; every one knows where the "Olympic" is.

Mr. Mitchell is the presiding deity, combining in himself the double character of manager and actor. In both, he is *sui generis*, for in the former capacity he does not recognize the *starring* system, which has proved one of the greatest obstacles to the success of the drama in this country, and in the latter, he is perfectly unique and original.

Mr. Mitchell made his *début* on the stage of life in 1798, in Durham, England, but who his father or mother was, or is, is a

matter of which we know nothing, and in which the reader would feel but little interest.

Equally ignorant are we of Mr. Mitchell's early pursuits. We have understood, however, from good authority, that at Richmond, Yorkshire, Mr. Mitchell first imbibed a love for theatricals.

Passing the theatre one morning, and seeing the doors open, curiosity induced him to venture in. It was during a rehearsal, and Mr. Samuel Butler, the tragedian, attracted his particular attention.

After several successive visits, he was discovered violating the rules of the establishment, and a polite request was made to him to discontinue them.

He had seen enough, however, to wish to see more, and accordingly, he went to the theatre at night, to witness the regular performance. Any one who recollects his own first attendance at the play, can easily conceive the effect of a first regular theatrical representation on a mind like that of the Olympic manager.

There is a perfect charm and novelty about it, that commends itself to the senses. The lights, the scenery, the music, and the well-dressed people in the boxes—are all calculated to make an indelible impression on the mind of the novice. Certainly it did on that of Mr. Mitchell, and it was here, probably, that his first theatrical aspirations began.

A short time after, he was engaged in the counting-room of a merchant at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where, for six years, he remained, although his avocation was far from congenial to his taste and disposition.

During his mercantile apprenticeship, he joined a private Thespian corps, with whom, if he did not acquire any extraordinary knowledge of the art which he afterwards adopted as a profession, he gleaned some new facts in the history of life.

At length, weary of the drudgery of a counting-room, he



abandoned it, and made his first regular appearance on any stage at Newcastle, as the *Country Boy* in the "Recruiting Officer," in which he was highly successful. The second night, his performance of *Sam*, in "Raising the Wind," decided his professional fate.

After performing in a variety of places, and enduring all the inconveniences and annoyances to which the life of a strolling player is subject, he obtained a situation in Mr. De Camp's company, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His prospects now began to brighten, and for two seasons he played in almost every variety of character, and with increased success.

It may be as well to state here, that Mr. Mitchell afterwards became the manager of the circuit of theatres, then under the control of De Camp.

He shortly after performed at Sheffield, Newcastle, and various other towns in the circuit of Alexander, then manager of the Edinburgh Theatre.

In 1831, he visited London, and opened at the Strand Theatre, in a very subordinate part, the manager having but an indifferent opinion of his capacities as an actor.

Managers, however, like other people, are not always correct in their judgments,

"Their doubts are traitors to them."

Still, there were persons present who perceived and appreciated Mitchell's abilities; among others, Mr. Leman Rede, who, in the endeavor to bring him into notice, wrote a piece expressly for him, entitled "Professionals Puzzled," which was received with decided approbation.

His position as an actor now daily became more satisfactory to himself and friends, and the commendations of the London critics were warm and numerous. The *Weekly Dispatch*, in noticing

his performance of *Jem Bags*, in the "Wandering Minstrel," said :—

"He is inimitable. His acting is the raciest thing we ever saw upon the stage, and he does not lose sight for one moment of the rich part he is embodying. The piece was intended for Reeve, but we defy him to have made of the part one tenth of what Mitchell renders it."

In 1834, he was engaged at the Coburg, where he filled the double capacity of actor and stage manager.

The London Examiner, which is regarded as high authority in theatrical matters, thus noticed his performance of the character alluded to above :—

"We have never seen anything so perfect—dress, voice, walk, manner, the quintessence of squalid blackguardism ; the picture of him on the walls affords no adequate notion of the personation ; he looks as if an extra pound of soap, and a new small tooth comb would be requisite to all who came within a yard of him."

The following anecdote will show the ready wit of Mr. Mitchell, and give our readers a slight inkling of his character.

When he left the provinces, to try his future career in the great metropolis, he luckily secured an engagement at one of the minor theatres.

Douglas Jerrold, the popular writer of the Caudle Lectures, was the author for the same establishment ; soon after Mr. Mitchell's appearance here, Mr. Jerrold produced a piece, the name of which we have forgotten. Under the terms of his arrangement with the manager, Mr. Mitchell was entitled to the part of *Raggs*, but he was just from the provinces, and unknown alike to the public and the author. The latter was anxious that Keeley should enact the character, and to this proposal Mitchell demurred. This excited the ire of Jerrold, and the actor was

sent for to the manager's office, to receive a reprimand from the incensed author. Jerrold commenced by making some remarks about the impertinence of provincial actors, and their absurd pretensions, when Mr. Mitchell reminded him that he must speak to him as a gentleman, or he should treat him as he had served the manager two days previous—that is, flog him. This, however, was not calculated to allay the ill feelings of the author, and he remarked to Mitchell that he would “write him down—he would live to be revenged;” to which threat Mr. Mitchell pithily replied that Mr. Jerrold would “doubtless live to be revenged, for he would see him in *Raggs* and be glad of it.”

Jerrold was not the man to resist this, and grasping the hand of Mitchell, said he should play the part; Mr. Mitchell did so, and made it one of the most popular things of the day. Mr. Jerrold has since been one of Mitchell's warmest friends.

In June, 1836, Mr. Mitchell embarked for America, with Mr. Flynn, by whom he was engaged for the National Theatre, New York, and opened on the twenty-ninth of August, in the “Wandering Minstrel,” and “The Man with the Carpet Bag.”

Mr. Mitchell's claims as a delineator of low comedy were at once recognized, and his performance of *Jem Bags* established him high in the estimation of the lovers of the comic muse.

In September, 1837, the Olympic Theatre was opened, but whether under the management of Mitchell or otherwise we have forgotten. Here, however, is the address delivered on the occasion, which will be new to the reader:—

#### “ ADDRESS.

“ WE hail the light ! the light that earliest shone  
O'er domes with moss and ivy now o'ergrown ;  
Which o'er *created* Greece in Glory broke  
(While primal darkness quail'd beneath its stroke),  
Gilt with its beams th' Ægean's mirror bright,  
And shone resplendent from Olympus' height ;

Then Art upreared her temples to the sky,  
Then gleamed thy mellowed light, Philosophy !  
'Till Learning's tones through every hamlet breathed,  
Fair poesy her fadeless garland wreathed;  
And Intellect her daring wing unfurled,  
To soar exulting o'er a raptured world.

"Mid scenes like these to life the Drama sprung,  
Fire in her soul and Music on her tongue ;  
Chased from the mind its real woes away,  
And flashed thereon Illusion's brightening ray ;  
Bid iron Care before her smile depart ;  
And poured Joy's waters on the thirsty heart—  
Lent charms to Language, eloquence to song,  
'Till waked to ecstasy th' admiring throng !  
Humor, to woo us from each leaden trance,—  
And Wit, to light with smiles each countenance ;  
'Till 'neath her feet their tribute wreaths were strown,  
Her joys they shared, her smiles were all their own,  
And Greece, from Hellas' tide to border wave,  
Though sternly free, was yet the Drama's slave.

" Proudly she rose—the cynosure of Mind—  
Nor left she aught in her high course behind ;  
Skyward careering, still the Drama soared,  
And wide o'er Earth a quickening radiance poured ;  
Till spire and column marked the reign of Art,  
And soft Refinement ruled the swelling heart ;  
Till Man's free soul, exulting spurned the clod,  
And felt the spell which woos it up to God.

" Her voice was heard within the mimic bowers,  
Where Comus' votaries led the laughing hours,  
And many an eye which grief had rudely wrung,  
Flashed Joy's own sunbeams when Thalia sung ;  
While bright-eyed Mirth joined Pleasure's jocund train,  
And danced in keeping to the Musal strain ;  
Or laughed with Thespis, 'till the wondering throng,  
Bound by the thrall of Satire, Wit and Song,



Caught from the Actor all the Poet's fire,  
And blessed the sway they felt but to admire ;  
While to their fixed and fervid gaze was shown  
Two brighter worlds—the Drama's and their own !

“ Friends of the Stage, the laughing Muse is Ours,  
And bids you welcome from her throne of flowers.  
She bids you hail ! Not in the pensive mood,  
Which palls the soul with deeds of guilt and blood.  
Her's is the power, the balmy power of Art,  
To soothe the passions and improve the heart ;  
She smiling waits to charm you with her skill,  
And make her power subservient to your will.  
And when all other *notes* are little worth,  
To give you hers, *endorsed* and *signed* by Mirth,  
Throw wide her *vaults* and with a liberal hand,  
What the *bills* call for, *Pay upon Demand*,  
Present your claim, she'll surely pay the debt,—  
*No pressure here will she or we regret.*  
She courts a *run*, if we in turn may *draw*,  
Your *check* her guide, your smile or frown her law.  
True ! these are times of dark and dire portent,  
And money brings a Shylock-like per cent ;  
Nay, it is said the OLYMPIC may not hope,  
With times like these successfully to cope.

“ Friends of the drama ! pointing skyward now,  
We ask a wreath to deck the Drama's brow.  
Let them no ivy with Joy's laurels twine,  
No dregs of sorrow mingle with Mirth's wine—  
We bid you here to laugh, and not to weep ;  
To wake your Mirth, and hush your Cares to sleep ;  
This will we do, and trust your smiles to win,  
We will *pay out*, so long as you *pay in*.”

The musical taste of Mr. Mitchell is best shown by the fact, that the Olympic is famous for its successful production of Tragicomedies of the best operas, and has enabled the manager to concentrate as much melody in a small compass, as ever regaled the

ears of our music loving citizens. We recollect, when "Amilie" was produced at the National by the Shirreff *troupe*, and played every night consecutively, for many weeks, seeing the future ruler of the "Olympic Games" snugly ensconced in the orchestra, gazing with admiring eyes on the fascinating Shirreff, actually rubbing his hands with delight, and breaking out occasionally with a hearty "bravo," to the astonishment and displeasure of the savage looking leader. We regarded him at the time as "music mad;" but it appears that he still retains all the enthusiasm he then evinced, for we have listened to the admirable imitation of the same opera, known as "Amy Lee," and experienced almost as much gratification as when witnessing the original.

The most successful piece ever produced at the Olympic, and which first brought the theatre prominently before the public, was the "Savage and the Maiden," dramatized from Dickens' "Nicholas Nickleby."

Mr. Mitchell's personation of *Crummles* at once ensured the success of the piece, and he became, in its literal sense, "Manager Crummles," producing a variety of "prodigies," that have delighted the crowded audiences of the little Olympic, and filled the capacious pockets of its successful manager.

## CHAPTER XIX.

The American Drama—Obstacles to its success—Prejudices against the theatre—Its uses and abuses—Abolishment of the “third tier”—Theatrical licenses—Characteristics of the Americans—Dependence on England for their opinions—The Cushmans—Forrest—His Shaksperian efforts—European actors—Native performers—Charles H. Eaton—Performance of Richard—His accident and the cause—His death—The performances of American actors considered—Peculiarities of style—Shakspeare abused—The incongruities of his pieces as represented—Performance of “William Tell”—Ludicrous termination of the scene.

IN some of the previous pages of this work, we have hinted at the absurd system of *starring* as being ruinous to a majority of our actors, and an impediment to the success of theatricals in our country.

However great may have been our progress in literature and the arts, the American stage has for years made but little or no advancement.

Great as is our reverence for Shakspeare, we confess that had the representation of his plays been confined to Europe, it would have been more favorable to the growth of our own Drama.

While every original play is subject to comparison with those of the “poet of all time,” it can hardly be expected that the productions of our native authors will find any extraordinary degree of favor with those who visit the theatre. The plays of Shakspeare, too, which only require that the language be read with good emphasis and discretion to make them attractive, are much

more easily put upon the stage, than the efforts of our native authors, of which fact the comedy of "Fashion" is an instance, requiring all the embellishments of scenery and dress to make it at all endurable.

Another obstacle to the success of the drama in our country, is the appropriation of a certain portion of the house to abandoned women. Never, while this feature in the system of our play-houses exists, will the theatre be universally encouraged and supported ; never will the religious portion of the community give it their countenance and favor. Let Managers say what they will, if it requires the allurements of these "painted sepulchres" to make the theatre attractive, better that the drama should perish, than virtuous women should be compelled to mingle with the harlots that brush past them in the lobbies. We do not believe in the truth of the poet's couplet :—

" Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,  
That to be hated needs but to be seen."

The strong prejudice, and it is a natural one, of a large portion of the community, arises, not from the uses, but the abuses of the stage ; that the feeling exists is sufficiently evident.

In every temple dedicated to the fine arts, all breaches of decorum are carefully guarded against, and why this branch of them, perhaps the most popular of all, should be subject to the just reproach of many, is indeed remarkable.

There is no excuse to be offered by managers, except that it is a *custom* ; but one "more honored in the breach than the observance," it most surely is.—One only in New York, has had the independence to abolish this most odious feature or rather blot upon the face of decency, the "third tier." So long as any manager allows this nuisance to exist, so long will there be a well grounded objection to visit the theatre, as a place of moral



instruction or intellectual amusement. The mind will instinctively associate the real with the ideal, and while rapt in a dream of enthusiasm at a fictitious representation of virtue, it turns and recognizes at a glance the real monster, vice, within the range of its vision. We are gratified to perceive that a reformation has commenced in one of our cities, that argues well for the good taste and morality of its authorities. The new theatre recently erected in the city of Boston, among other excellent regulations, excludes from its walls all females unattended, or in other words, refuses to make a temple, erected for the purpose of intellectual instruction, pander to the worst passions of our nature. For the welfare of virtue and humanity, we hope this precedent will be widely followed, for every one who sincerely desires the advancement of the drama to its legitimate uses, will rejoice at this long needed reform.

There is still another obstacle to the advancement of our stage, which, though comparatively small, is so absurd and oppressive as to render it worthy of notice. We allude to the law which subjects every manager to the payment of a certain sum for a license to enact plays.

Whether theatrical exhibitions are calculated to advance the cause of morality or otherwise, we shall not hazard an opinion; but if they be not, the payment of five hundred dollars, or any other sum, for the privilege of performing pieces, seems to us to be but a purchase of a *right* to do *wrong*.

If our wise legislators regard the stage as an evil, let them abolish it altogether, instead of placing a tax on vice; if otherwise, let them remove this odious and oppressive burden, which rests exclusively on one profession.

We have not unfrequently heard it contended, that managers should not be subjected to the control of the press, but in our opinion, the government itself might with propriety extend its direction towards the theatre, for we are satisfied that it might be made

a powerful engine for good or evil. In France, where the standard of morality is low enough to satisfy the most depraved mind, the presence of abandoned women in the boxes of the theatre is altogether unknown, while in America, where we follow with servile imitation, the customs and vices of England, a theatre without a third tier for the use of prostitutes, has never been in existence.

In America we have long been in the habit of relying on the opinions and judgment of others, instead of our own. Native merit requires the stamp of England to give it currency.

Let any actor, no matter what may be his position or rank in Europe, land upon our soil and announce himself on the bills in large type, with the magic words, "From Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres," preceded by a few stereotyped puffs, and in every city in the Union where there is a theatre, he can shine as a *star* of extraordinary magnitude.

Our critics never discovered the ability of the Cushmans until they went to Europe, and on their return, we may confidently anticipate that the Park Theatre will not be found sufficiently capacious to contain the crowds that will welcome them in their "newly gained honors." Indeed, we do not recollect ever having seen the name of Susan Cushman in the play bills on more than one or two occasions.

It has been nearly the same with Forrest. His Shaksperian performances are by many pronounced faultless, since his return from Europe, when in fact he is no better actor now than previous to his departure, and we doubt if he ever will be. The fine and delicate sinuosities of Hamlet's philosophy do not find a perfect delineation in his performance, while in Macbeth, he sinks almost to mediocrity when compared with the elder Vandenhoff or Macready ; however great may be the praise awarded him for his representation of *King Lear*, with the exception of the curse at the end of the first act (which he gives with extraordinary

energy and effect), and the last scene, in which his restoration of the original text is highly commendable to his judgment, we do not consider it a master effort.

We recollect many years since, while sitting in the Park Theatre, witnessing Mr. Forrest's *Lear*, hearing a celebrated American comedian make the remark, "Why, the man *shakes* as if he had the ague," to which a wag at his elbow replied, "Well, it's *Shakspeare* that he's *doing*."

While we are on the subject of native actors, we are reminded of the unfortunate Charles H. Eaton, who, a few years since, gave promise of a most brilliant career.

Mr. Eaton was a native of Boston, and when remarkably young, manifested the possession of extraordinary ability. We recollect his performance of *Richard the Third*, at the Park Theatre, soon after his *début*. It was during the summer months, when "the world was out of town." Not over a dozen persons were present, and the larger proportion of those were in the pit. We happened to be among the number. We had taken our seat previous to the rising of the curtain, and not a breath of pure air was allowed to interfere with the thick and poisonous atmosphere, which sundry lamps and closed windows had produced. None but an inveterate lover of theatricals could have endured it, but being comparatively a novice, we were willing to suffer martyrdom in the cause.

The curtain rose, and *King Henry*, with a discretion that did honor to his feelings, curtailed his long speeches of half their "fair proportions." The scene changed, and Gloster entered. A volley of applause echoed from the determined dozen, adown whose cheeks rolled rivers of perspiration. Like Othello, they were indeed in the "melting mood."

The opening soliloquy reminded us strongly of Booth, upon whose acting Eaton had evidently founded his style. There was the same determined step, and deep emphatic tone of voice. His gestures,



like Booth's, were appropriate, and his attitudes at once graceful and imposing. Regardless of the "beggarly account of empty boxes," Eaton did not relax his exertions, but went manfully through the part. Occasionally, he was rewarded by all the applause that so limited an audience could bestow, and though he probably experienced none of that determination which the presence of a larger attendance might have inspired, he continued to the close, without any diminution of energy or effect.

There seems to be almost a fatality in the lives of great tragedians. As we have already alluded to the subject, however, in another part of this work, we will not tire the reader by a repetition, but merely remark that Mr. Eaton accustomed himself to habits of inordinate indulgence, which resulted in his premature death.

On his way to Cincinnati, he stopped at Pittsburgh, and applied to Flynn, who was then manager of the theatre in that city, for an engagement of six nights, being short of funds, and anxious to reach his family. Flynn engaged him, and the first night he played with success. At the second rehearsal, he came to the theatre intoxicated, and Flynn, who, from experience, knew the evils resulting from over indulgence, remonstrated with him, declaring that, if he repeated the offence, he would not allow him to perform. Eaton promised amendment, and was sober until the play was over, when Flynn discovered him in a bar-room, with a glass of liquor in his hand. Flynn again remonstrated, and Eaton asked forgiveness.

While on his way to his lodgings, he encountered a brother player, who invited him to take a social glass at a neighboring tavern. It required but little persuasion to make him consent, and they both became intoxicated. Eaton came home reeling, and a servant conducted him to his room. In endeavoring to open the door, he staggered against a railing around the balcony of the



house, which gave way, and he was precipitated head foremost to the pavement below, a distance of thirty feet.

Physicians were immediately sent for, and at the expiration of three days, during which period he was senseless, he arose from his bed, and for the first time since his accident, spoke: "Where is my wife? my wi"—and with the half-uttered word upon his lips, fell backwards and expired.

Eaton, to our mind, was the most promising actor that this country ever produced, but he died before time had ripened those powers which gave earnest of future excellence.

We have already alluded to the deficiency of study and application which characterizes the great proportion of, if not all, American actors. Each seems to have made Mr. Forrest his *beau ideal*, and, as is generally the case with imitators, each copies all his faults, and but few of his merits. All seem to think that the chief beauty in a performance is making a noise, and to do them justice, in this they are entirely successful. The contracted brow, the extended arm, the clenched hand, the gigantic stride, and unnatural shake, are imitated with unerring fidelity, while passages of beauty and soliloquies pregnant with sentiment and feeling, are slurred over and disregarded, from very want of conception of the part. If the actor's art be "to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature," how lamentably deficient are those to whom we refer, in all the elements that constitute a perfect actor.

The extraordinary representations of Shakspeare, at some of our theatres, are enough to summon the shade of the poet to protest against so wretched a burlesque of his glorious imaginings.

Every principle of congruity is set at defiance. Regardless of time and place, the characters of Queen Elizabeth's time are dressed according to the costume of the nineteenth century. Hamlet, a Danish Prince, who lived many hundred years

ago, comes forth adorned with glass beads and black velvet; Macbeth flourishes in a dress, worth all the wealth of Scotland, in the time of the Thane of Cawdor; the armies of Rome and England consist of a half dozen superannuated individuals; and the authors for the theatres, usurping the pen of the dramatist, are allowed to compress five acts into three, and to disregard all laws of unity and every principle of dramatic composition.

We were much amused one evening at the performance of Knowles' play of "William Tell." The principal character was represented by an individual whose powers of *physique*, in the estimation of the audience, amply atoned for any want of mental ability. The piece was compressed into three acts, and in the scene where he is to shoot at the apple on his son's head, he made six abortive attempts to send the arrow from the bow. Discouraged by his repeated failures, he finally threw the arrow, by sleight of hand, without the aid of the bow, and, instead of hitting the intended object, struck the head of a defenceless youth in the pit, entirely unprepared for the part of Albert thus uncere- moniously thrust upon him, while the real son was ushered in amidst shouts and hurras at his miraculous escape. No doubt he was among the first to congratulate himself on going *Scott* free.

## CHAPTER XX.

Mrs. Charles Kean—Her first efforts—Engagement at Drury Lane Theatre—Appearance at Covent Garden—Her success—Her performance of *Ion*—Opinions of a critic—*Début* in America—Return to England—Mr. and Mrs. Kean at the Park Theatre—Mrs. Kean's performance of *Viola* and *Rosalind*—Causes of success—Her *Julia*, in the "*Hunchback*"—Her *Beatrice*—Opinion of William Leggett—Mrs. Kean's peculiar qualifications for an actress—Commercial Revulsion of 1837—Its effects on the drama—Lardner on the system of Stars—Lectures *vs.* the Legitimate—The Drama a means of moral instruction—"Defence of the Stage."

AMONG the galaxy of stars that have shone in our theatrical hemisphere, none have shed more brilliancy upon the stage than Ellen Tree (now Mrs. Charles Kean).

Her chaste and beautiful personations of some of Shakspeare's most delightful conceptions of female character, among which are *Viola*, *Rosalind*, *Juliet* and *Portia*, can never fade from the memory of those who have witnessed her efforts, whilst in the higher walks of tragedy, she has won that high praise to which she is eminently entitled.

Her performance of *Mrs. Beverly* in the "*Gamester*" is every way worthy of her reputation, evincing a depth of feeling and pathos rarely equalled and never excelled.

We have understood that Mrs. Kean's attention was first turned to the stage in consequence of the success of her sister Maria, who had obtained great celebrity in light comedy and melodrama.

After performing some time with her sister at Bath and Bir-

mingham, sustaining the leading parts in comedy with great success, she was engaged at Drury Lane in 1827, during which season she played *Lady Teazle*, *Viola*, and various other characters.

She afterwards accepted an engagement at Covent Garden, where she made her first effort in tragedy, in the character of *Françoise*, in Fanny Kemble play of "Francis the First;" she shortly after appeared as *Julia*, in Knowles' play of the "Hunchback," which she repeated twenty-eight nights.

Its success induced the author to write another play, in which she might support the leading part. The "Wife" was produced, and played successfully for fifty-two consecutive nights.

Miss Tree had now the stream of public favor at the flood, which has since carried her to fame and fortune; her subsequent appearance in *Lady Macbeth* and *Ion* established her reputation as a correct and classical actress.

Her performance of the latter character has been so frequently criticised and commended that any remarks of our own might be considered superfluous; we will, however, subjoin the following from the pen of an able critic, in whose judgment we repose the utmost confidence:—

"The manner in which that character was played by Ellen Tree would allow us to imagine her imbued with the ancient notions of Fate. It was not merely an elegant modern reading of an antique creed, but a direct embodiment of a personage in whom that belief was deeply and religiously implanted. Hence, there was a holy warmth expressed in the acting, that gave the *Ion* a perfect verisimilitude of a youth nurtured within the walls of a temple of that religion. Hence, also, as it is not attended with the violent action and delivery which is the frequent cause of stage effect, it required to be examined, and the performance to be witnessed more than once, before all the inherent beauties could



be elicited. The acting of Miss Tree in this character was beyond all praise, and entitled her to the term, in the utmost rigor of its meaning, of a classical actress."

On the 12th December, 1836, she made her first appearance in America, at the Park Theatre, New York, as *Rosalind* in "As you Like it." She afterwards appeared as *Lady Townley* in the "Provoked Husband," as *Letitia Hardy* in the "Belle's Stratagem," as *Julia* in the "Hunchback," and in various other characters, in all of which she elicited the highest encomiums from immense audiences. After having made a professional tour of all the principal cities of the United States, "winning golden opinions from all sorts of people," and adding increased lustre to a name already bright, she left for England in the summer of 1838. She returned to this country in 1845, having in the meantime married Mr. Charles Kean. Their reception in New York on the Park boards, where they made their first appearance after their return, was most flattering. During this engagement, they played a variety of parts both in tragedy and comedy, always commanding full houses.

In a certain line of characters, Mrs. Kean is unequalled by any actress who has appeared on the American stage. Her *Viola* in the "Twelfth Night," and *Rosalind* in "As you Like it," are exhibitions in the histrionic art, that can never die in the memory of those judges of acting who have beheld them.

It is in the nicer shades,—the back-ground, as it were, of the picture, that she excels her competitors in the cast of characters to which we have referred.

One cause of her success, we think, may be attributed to the complete abandonment of herself in the part she is representing. She *feels* the character.

It appears to be a difficult matter for the heroes and heroines of the "sock and buskin" to forget themselves in their persona-

tions; indeed some of them seem to fear that in making their great points, the audience may so far lose sight of them, in the interest excited by the play, as to overlook the person to whom they are indebted for the scenic illusion, and accordingly they give their performance such a stamp of personality as effectually to prevent their being mistaken for the character assumed.

We have particularized Mrs. Kean's *Viola* and *Rosalind*, because they are portraitures in the dramatic art on which the memory loves to linger; but there are many other parts in which she is equally happy. Her *Julia* in the "Hunchback," considering it as an entire performance, is not inferior to the representation of that character by the gifted Fanny Kemble, whose secession from the stage every lover of the histrionic art cannot but sincerely deplore.

Of her *Beatrice*, in "Much Ado about Nothing," that astute critic in theatrical matters, the late William Leggett, said:—

"Other actresses have given us particular traits of her character with liveliness and effect; but Miss Tree infuses life and soul in them all, and combines them into one with inimitable harmony and grace."

Among the numerous qualifications for her profession of which Mrs. Kean is possessed, is her beautiful and melodious voice, the plaintive tones of which, in passages of tenderness, appeal directly to the heart, and the language of joyousness, in falling from her lips, has a richness and vivacity which is as pleasing as it is indescribable.

The last engagement of the Keans at the Park Theatre was an evidence of the estimation in which Mrs. Kean is held in this country, the house being nightly crowded from pit to dome, although they appeared in a round of characters which have been

repeated on various occasions at the same establishment, within a few months.

It also serves to evince the fact that, however much the drama may have declined in latter years, the taste for theatrical representations is still deep and almost universal.

The commercial revulsion of 1837, which spread like a hurricane through the land, affected every branch of the arts. So blighting was its influence upon theatricals, that in the opinion of many, they received a shock from which they would never recover. But they misjudged; the craving that people have for recreation is too fully satisfied by the stage to allow its extinction or permanent decline, while the light of education is spread abroad. As a legal gentleman once expressed it: "Theatricals have their foundation in the nature of things."

While the theatre was comparatively deserted, several species of amusement were offered in their place; among which were concerts and lectures, the friends of the latter confidently asserting that the day for the mimic scene was past.

The Park Theatre, itself, was used by Doctor Lardner as a Lecture-room, where he illustrated the *Starring* system with great satisfaction to himself and the public. But, however useful lectures may be, they will not answer as a substitute for the instruction and enjoyment derived from visiting a well regulated theatre.

Within a year or two past, the taste for the drama has revived, giving evidence of our recovery from the financial shock to which we have adverted, and proving that the public appreciate an art which unites amusement with instruction; we hope it will not be in our day, that prejudice or fanaticism will destroy one of the most ancient and intellectual institutions.

It is worthy of remark, that amidst all the warfare waged against the stage, its opponents attack their collateral abuses, totally irrelevant, and "from the purpose of playing;" they can

render no firm reason why moral instruction cannot be conveyed from the stage, as well as from the sacred desk ; why a living and breathing personation of a great vice, or a great virtue, may not affect us as deeply and sensibly as the cold and studied declamation, delivered between waking and sleeping in a lecture-room. It was the remark of a celebrated clergyman, that in witnessing the representation of Macbeth, he was more fully taught the terrible retribution attending the violation of the commandment "Thou shalt do no murder," than he could hope to convey by a dozen sermons. Let the opposition to the abuses connected with the stage be continued, until they are reformed ; let it no longer be subject to a stigma not rightfully belonging to it, and it will rise to an eminence too lofty for detraction, too pure for reproach.

The following eloquent extract from the "Defence of the Stage" is too just to be omitted in this place.

"From all I can collect upon the subject, by reading, discussion, observation, and experience, I feel myself authorised to affirm, that a well regulated stage would be ever serviceable to mankind, an able assistant of religion, a strong stimulus to morality, a rigid inculcator to virtue, a soother and corrector of the vindictive passions, a moderator and promoter of the gentler ones, and a powerful agent in the hands of a wise legislator for forming a nation to everything *great and good*."



## CHAPTER THE LAST.

Desultory reflections—Mr. Booth's career on the stage—His abilities as an actor considered—His eccentricities—Thoughts on Genius—Concluding observations.

IN bringing this work to a conclusion, we are conscious that there is much in the history of Mr. Booth's life that remains to be written, and more in those of his contemporaries, to which we have not even alluded.

The career of almost any actor of eminence would supply material for a more elaborate production than the imperfect one which we submit to the public; the hindrances to youthful ambition, the lonely hours of intense study, the difficulties attending the early efforts of the player, the jealousies and rivalries engendered, with their long train of concomitant evils, are subjects with which almost every performer is acquainted.

When we reflect how few, among the multitudinous number of individuals who have sought reputation or profit in the histrionic art, have risen to eminence, the conviction is irresistible, that without the most superior qualifications of mental and physical ability, success is unattainable. One, among the few, is Mr. Booth.

At his *début* he was assailed with all the virulence and abuse that the most rancorous enmity and hostility could suggest. The extraordinary favor with which the Kembles were regarded, the high position which they occupied in public favor, and the hold

they had acquired upon the minds of the patrons of the drama in favor of their peculiar style of acting, were anything but favorable to the advent of a new *star* in the theatrical firmament, which, instead of shedding one long and continuous ray of light, revealed, in quick succession, an interminable number of flashes that irradiated the whole horizon ; or to drop the metaphor,—an actor that startled and electrified his audience by sudden and unexpected flashes of intellectual brightness, by bold and rapid manifestations of mental power, and by a confident reliance on nature for a guide, rather than on studied and formal attitudes, and mechanical gesticulation.

Mr. Booth, however, *commanded* admiration, and without resorting to the usual methods of securing approbation and applause by the aid of splendid dresses and stage tricks, won an imperishable fame. Like the wand of Midas, that converted everything it touched to gold, so in the crucible of Booth's genius, every character that he attempted, came forth redolent of excellence.

His beautifully modulated voice, clear, distinct, and sonorous,—his expressive eye, that revealed more than any words could convey, and his appropriate and graceful gesticulation, rendered all his impersonations interesting and admirable.

In tender passages, the mournful and touching cadences of his voice appealed directly to the heart, and in the representation of sterner passages, his acting approximated to the sublime.

In depicting violent rage, or unrelenting hate—in the portrayal of bold and romantic villainy, in exhibiting the satisfaction of triumphant revenge, or the terrific workings of despair, he never had a superior, and even now, at his mature age, though but a faint semblance of what he was, he is the only living representative of Richard, Sir Giles Overreach, and Iago.

Mr. Booth's career off the stage has rendered him liable to the charge of eccentricity. It were in vain, however, to attempt to account for the idiosyncrasies of genius. The "one step from

the sublime to the ridiculous" is not shorter than the distance from the highest and most sublimated degree of intellectuality, to madness itself.

There is a point of human knowledge, says Dr. Johnson, "at which reason and madness begin to mingle." The mind that broods over its own thoughts ; that lives in a world of its own creation ; that pictures in its own imagination the ideal forms of the poet ; that, in the dreamy languor of poetical reverie, fritters away the hours, unconscious of the living and breathing beings around it ; that fashions its own world all *couleur de rose*, and peoples it with the misty creations of a rapt and excited fancy, can hardly be expected to regard the dull and prosaic common-places of life with the same feelings as your cold and calculating philosopher, who sees things, not as he would have them, but as they are.

It is the peculiar characteristic of genius to find no sympathy, for it seeks none, with a cold and uncongenial world. Enveloped in the solitude of its own high thoughts—rapt in its own bright visions, its glorious aspirations for some undefined and unattained object, it goes forward on its mission, to encounter but disappointment and defeat. Sensitive to the last degree, it meets with rude rebuffs ; with the most enlarged and liberal sympathies, it finds no congenial association around it. Its object is aimless, but it longs for something unattained. It looks forward, full of hope, but it knows not wherefore ; it would rend the impenetrable veil of the future to discover some response to its undefined but measureless aspirations ; it is the great and insatiable craving of the soul which this world cannot satisfy.

In the mazy labyrinth of its bewildering thoughts, it sometimes "o'erleaps itself and falls on the other side" of reason, where, with madness mixed, like Iago's invention, "it plucks out brains and all."

The dull machinery of life, with all its petty annoyances, falls like a leaden weight upon its spirit—a thousand imaginary terrors

possess it, until, lost and bewildered in the strange and discordant dream which its own excited fancy has engendered, it seeks for refuge and forgetfulness in the depths of the intoxicating bowl, and often in death itself.

Let not the cold and rigid moralist condemn with unsparing censure the infirmities of noble minds. Who shall say what "floods of memoried bitterness" they have passed through ; what stiflings of the "mighty hunger of the heart" they have endured ; what warm and glowing feelings have been chilled ; what tender sensibilities have been deadened by the rude jostle of an unfeeling world ?

There are more motives to action in the breast of man than philosophy has yet discovered. Could we look into the *hearts* of men, we are confident there would be found no dark and "damned spot" in that of JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH.

THE END.



John G. Smith





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